

ROYAL FAVOURITES

BY

SUTHERLAND MENZIES

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II



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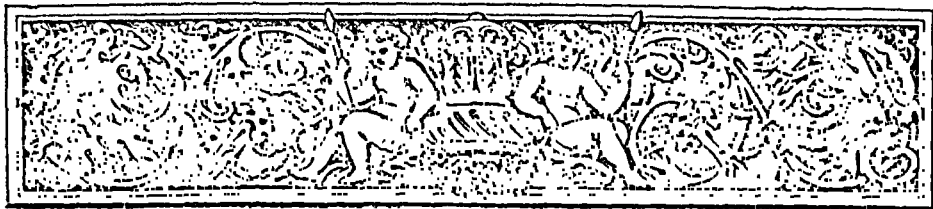
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CHAPTER I.

GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

I.

THE FAVOURITE OF TWO KINGS AND RIVAL OF SOMERSET AND RICHELIEU—BIRTH AND PARENTAGE OF GEORGE VILLIERS—HIS HONOURABLE DESCENT—DEFECTIVE EDUCATION—RARE PERSONAL ENDOWMENTS AND SHOWY ACCOMPLISHMENTS—FALLS IN LOVE WITH THE DAUGHTER OF SIR ROBERT ASTON, *quondam* BARBER TO JAMES I.—DIS-SUADED FROM EARLY MATRIMONY, AND RESOLVING “TO WOO FORTUNE IN THE COURT,” LOVE YIELDS TO AMBITION—VILLIERS FIRST ATTRACTS THE KING’S NOTICE AT A HORSE-RACE—OWES HIS INTRODUCTION AT COURT TO SIR THOMAS LAKE.

RECENT research has thrown fresh and, for the most part, favourable light upon the character of George Villiers,* Duke of Buckingham—that magnificent favourite of our first two Stuart kings, who, as the daring lover of a young Queen of France, became doubly the rival and foe of the astute and implacable Cardinal Richelieu.

Very interesting is it to trace the comparatively humble origin and low estate of one who rose to be at once “minion, minister, and master” of his sovereign, dictator of his parliament, and for a brief period arbiter of war or peace to the nations. But the unexampled exaltation of this extraor-

* Chiefly among inedited State Papers in the State Paper Office.

learned also to speak and write French, but that was the only foreign language he acquired during a three years' residence abroad. It is clear that he was disinclined to serious study of any kind, for he returned to England, we are told, "exact to perfection in every accomplishment which could be bestowed by an education from which all that we are used to call learning seems to have been utterly excluded."

Though Villiers on attaining his majority could boast of no scholarship, he was undeniably excellent at sword-fence, a first-rate horseman both in the tilt-yard and the hunting-field, a more graceful dancer than Hatton, and a better-dressed man than Raleigh, though for lack of wardrobe he had no opportunity of displaying his symmetrical figure and exquisite taste in costume bravely to the best advantage. His pecuniary resources, indeed, at this time were so limited that it was with difficulty he was enabled to maintain his position as a gentleman. Yet, in spite of Fortune's malice on that score, he possessed some qualities that wealth cannot always command—being perfectly well bred; for we have the authority of Lord Clarendon that he was a "fair-spoken gentleman, of a sweet and acceptable nature." The Earl of Essex, to whom Villiers is compared by the same noble author, was taller and of an older body than the favourite of James I. But Villiers had the "nearer limbs and swifter delivery, he carried his well-proportioned body well, and every movement was graceful." We are also told that he "exceeded in the daintiness of his leg and foot," whilst Essex was celebrated for delicate hands, "which," says his panegyrist, "though it be but for a moment, I took from his father." The complexion of George Villiers was singularly clear and beautiful, his forehead high and smooth, his eyes dark and full of intelligence and sweetness, whilst the perfect oval of his face and delicate turned features, though small, and the air of refinement which characterised both his countenance and his bearing, rendered him one of the most attractive of English beings. As he attained to maturity, a peculiar softness of manner, a freedom and gracefulness which distinguished him as a social favourite, and a power of throwing off the appearance of allaggerous business and secret cares,

although of these he had his share, and of assuming "a very pleasant and vacant face," a love of social life, and certain traits of character, half folly, half romance, gained upon every one that approached him before prosperity had changed courtesy into arrogance, or political intrigues marred the open expression of a physiognomy on which none could look without admiration.

So constituted, George Villiers returned to his mother's dower-house to gladden her maternal heart with qualities which the ambitious woman prized in him above all others, and which inspired her with the liveliest hope that a dazzling career eventually awaited one so largely endowed with those peculiar graces which best befit an aspirant yearning to achieve fortune in the contentious arena of a court.

Before any plan could be devised for his future life, and whilst loitering away his time in the tranquil shades of Goadby Grange, it is not surprising to find that his unoccupied heart surrendered itself to the tender passion. The fair object of his devotion was the daughter of Sir Robert Aston, of Aston, in Cheshire. The lady returned his love, and it was only the young man's inability "to make settlements" which prevented their marriage. Sir Robert was a gentleman of the bedchamber, a master of the robes to the king, and though he had previously held the humble office of barber to James I. in Scotland, was then a person of no inconsiderable influence at court. This may account, perhaps, for the favourable light in which the shrewd, fortune-seeking Lady Villiers looked upon the connexion, otherwise it would seem to have been calculated to frustrate her schemes for the future advancement of her idolized son. However that might be, it was with his mother's sanction that George Villiers followed the young lady to London. The attachment on her part was fervent and disinterested, but opposition to the engagement arose on the subject of the settlement. In consideration of a handsome portion which the bride-elect would bring, the suitor was required to settle the sum of eighty pounds a year upon her; but as Villiers' entire income did not exceed fifty or sixty pounds annually, such proposition was impracticable. "The gentlewoman loved him so well," says Weldon, "as,

rather the character of a court intrigue than a free exercise of the royal prerogative in an open dispensation of patronage from the "fount of honour." Villiers' staunch friend, Abbot, with others not named by the primate, stood at the door of the king's bedchamber, and entreated the queen with numerous messages that she would "perfect her work, and cause him to be made a gentleman." The queen and prince both at that moment conversing therein with the king, it was contrived that Villiers should be summoned on some pretext, and when the "queen saw her own time, he was asked in." "Then," says Nichols, "did the queen speak to the prince to draw out the sword and to give it her, and immediately, with the sword drawn, she knelt to the king, and humbly beseeched his majesty to do her that especial favour as to knight this noble gentleman, whose name was George, for the honour of St. George, whose feast was now kept. The king at first seemed to be afraid that the queen should come too near him with a naked sword, but then he did it very joyfully, and it might very well be that it was his own contriving, for he did much please himself with such narratives." An annuity of a thousand pounds was at the same time settled on Sir George out of the Court of Wards, wherewith to maintain the dignity of knighthood.

he should live on terms of friendship with, and be regarded with an affectionate interest by, the influential prelate Abbot. Shortly afterwards that excellent man addresses the young courtier on the first dawn of his rising splendour. "And now, my George, because of your kind affection towards me you style me your father, I will from this day forward repute and esteem you for my son, and so hereafter know yourself to be. And in token thereof, I do now give you my blessing again, and charge you, as my son, daily to serve God; to be diligent and pleasing to your master, and to be wary that at no man's instance you press him with many suits, because they are not your friends who urge those things upon you, but have private ends of their own, which are not fit for you. So praying God to bless you,

"I rest, your very loving father,

"G. CANT."*

The relentless Somerset early saw and marked the progress which his preferred rival was making in the king's favour, but he disdained to enter into any compromise with him. After the ceremony of dubbing had been gone through, which James seems to have performed with fear and trembling, the king is said to have shown himself anxious that Villiers should make conciliatory overtures to Somerset, and accordingly Sir Humphrey May having introduced himself into Somerset's presence, commenced by informing him that his rival was about to visit him with proffers of service and friendship. He used what arguments he could think of to reconcile the proud earl, adding, "Your lordship, though not the sole favourite, will still be a great man." As Somerset exhibited extreme repugnance to this singular arrangement, May unhesitatingly told him that he made the overture by the king's express command. Somerset was silent, and a few minutes afterwards Villiers himself visited the inimical Lord Chamberlain, and thus deferentially accosted him:—"My lord, I desire to be your servant and

* This letter, given in Bishop Goodman's *Life*, is endorsed "To my very loving son, Sir George Villiers, Knight," and dated Lambeth, December 10, 1615.

James's irrational lenity, moreover, was such toward's one sentenced to die for a horrible murder, that either because he had once been his favourite, or—as Hume, the historian, has darkly hinted—that he dreaded some revelation being made by the culprit that would implicate himself, the convicted earl had the liberty of the Tower granted him, and was allowed to walk about therein, still displaying his Garter and George, to the great scandal of all who beheld it. “It is much spoken of,” writes a contemporary, “how princes of that order, to let our own jaws, can digest to be coupled with a man civilly dead, and corrupt in blood, and so no gentleman, should continue a knight of the Garter.”*

Though the conduct of the weak king in sending repeated messages by Lord Hay to the condemned earl seemed already to betray a lurking intention of ultimately pardoning and restoring him, the young favourite—whatever might have been his secret suspicions on the score of his royal master's cypriote—expressed no check in his rapid advancement. Of the queen's favourable disposition towards him, the following familiar letter, sent to Villiers whilst attending the king on a progress, and only a few days before his elevation to the peerage, well & sufficiently vouches:—

As Bacon had been aided by the influence which Villiers exercised over James in procuring the Attorney-General's reception into the Privy Council, so now the astute lawyer, at once wise and pliant, showed himself equally solicitous of pleasing the royal donor as well as the young recipient of the peerage, the patent for which it became his duty to prepare. The document, however, underwent several alterations before all parties concerned were satisfied. Viscount Beaumont was the title first thought of, with the view of reflecting lustre on his mother's side of the family; and the coronet and robes were despatched to Woodstock, in order that the honour might be there conferred. The title of Baron Whaddon, in the county of Bucks, was, in the first instance, substituted for that of Beaumont, and subsequently, it being determined that a double creation should take place, that of Viscount Villiers was added—the first to secure the estates of Whaddon, forfeited by the unfortunate Lord Grey (accused of an attempt to place Arabella Stuart on the throne, and who had died in the Tower some three years previously)—and the latter to retain, agreeably with the king's express wish, the name of Villiers as the new peer's ordinary appellation. Lord Bacon, who drew up the preface to the patent with his own hand, on forwarding it for the royal approval, took occasion to remark that, in obedience to the king's instructions, he had avoided the use of "glaring terms" in it. Bacon must have felt greatly relieved by receiving such instructions, as it would have sorely tasked even his powerful invention to have discovered any services of Villiers of a nature to warrant such a misuse of words. "For the name," he writes, on sending the patent to the new viscount, "his majesty's will is law in these things; and to speak truth, it is a well-sounding name both here and abroad, and being even a proper name, I will take it for a good sign that you shall give honour to your dignity, and not your dignity to you. Therefore I have made it 'Viscount Villiers;' and as for your barony, *I will keep it for an earldom*, for though the latter had been more orderly, yet that is as usual, and both alike good in law." The words "I will keep it for an earldom" furnish a curious

reply to Lady Raleigh, when she pleaded at his feet for the restoration of Sherborne as a provision for her children, has been recorded to the everlasting disgrace of the king. "Raleigh," sputtered his majesty, "shall hae his liberty, but Carr maun hae the londe. I mean to hae it for Carr." The gift was afterwards looked upon as having carried a curse with it, for popular feeling ran very high in favour of Raleigh at the time of Somerset's downfall, and his possession of Sherborne, to the deprivation of the gallant knight's large family, acted very prejudicially against the earl on the occasion of his trial. On the other hand, the refusal of the same estate by Villiers in terms indicative of a nice sense of honour and right feeling, is so highly creditable to his character, that it is satisfactory to the historical student to find the fact confirmed by a grant, preserved in the State Paper Office,* in fee-simple to the Earl of Buckingham, of the manors of Beaumont, Oldhall and Newhall de Beaumont, Mose, Okeley Magna, Okeley Parva, Shigghawe, Okeley Park, Mose Park, Essex, together with all the tithes and advowsons belonging to them, which the Lord Bury of Chichester held for terme of his life. Manor of Flete, manors of Trowdale, Fleet-house Hall Halls, in Lincoln, in lieu of the manor of Teynton Magna, Gloucester, *part of rebe for Sherborne, ceded to the crown by Somerset's attorney.*

of government to a callow youth, of no more capacity than is enough to qualify a modern beau?" "For an old king," observes Coke,* "he having reigned in England and Scotland fifty-one years, to doat upon a young favourite scarce of age, yet younger in understanding, though old in vice as any of his time, and to commit the whole ship of the commonwealth by sea and land to such a Phaeton, is a precedent without any example." His envied position as a favourite, together with his unfitness to conduct the affairs of a great empire, have naturally drawn down upon him these harsh comments of historians. "Nevertheless," judiciously remarks a modern writer, "it is easier to impugn the wisdom of his counsels than the integrity of his intentions. Charles would never have fixed his affections on a really bad man; and however much we may regret the weak judgment and unfortunate influence of Buckingham, there is no reason to call in question either his zeal for his country or his attachment to his unfortunate master."

Together with his great honours and employments, Buckingham possessed a control so unbounded over the king's inclinations, that he became the sole dispenser of all royal favours; and it is said that even his mother now began to have, conjointly with him, such influence over matters of public concern that no places were disposed of without her consent, and as much court was paid to her as to her son.† On the 1st of July, 1618, she was created by letters patent Countess of Buckingham in her own person, an unusual kind of distinction, of which the last example had been in the days of Queen Mary.‡

The true character of the countess now rapidly developed itself. She showed herself to be a bold, busy, intriguing, masculine, and dangerous person. Not contented with assisting in the aggrandizement of her fortunate son, she determined not to leave the rest of her family in the background. She lived to see her eldest son Viscount Purbeck;§

* Roger Coke's "Delection."

† Oldmixon.

‡ "Reliquiæ Wottonianæ."

§ John, created, in 1619, Baron Villiers of Stoke and Viscount Purbeck.

Sir Henry Roper had for many years enjoyed the place of chief clerk for enrolling the pleas of the King's Bench; it was supposed to be worth 4000*l.* per annum. Being advanced in age, Sir Henry was disposed to relinquish the appointment on condition of being made Lord Teynham and receiving the salary during his life. Buckingham seized this opportunity of improving his fortunes. He applied for the reversion of the office to be granted to two of his trustees during their lives—a like application made formerly by the Earl of Somerset having met with success.* But the Lord Chief Justice stood in the way of this surrender on the part of Roper, and also of the proposed arrangement. He answered upon being first solicited, "that he was old and could not struggle,"—a reply which was regarded as a compliance. But when Sir Henry Roper actually surrendered the situation and was created Lord Teynham, Coke changed his tone, and stated that since the salaries of the judges in his court were very low, it would be desirable to increase them by the revenues of this office, which was at his disposal. Upon this it was resolved by the king and his favourite to remove him, and to substitute on the bench a more compliant judge. On two other notable points Coke had also offended the

service of his place. On the following Sunday Sir Edward Coke was sequestered from the council-table, and prohibited from riding his circuit, his place being supplied by Sir Randolph Crew.

So complicated were the various interests (public and private) affected by this disgraceful affair, that Coke's fate hung trembling in the balance until late in the year (1616), Queen Anne and Prince Charles being, to their credit, steadily urgent in his behalf. James himself, too, on intimating at the Privy Council his intention to supersede Coke, could not, with all his verbosity, conceal a feeling of shame at the deed, declaring that he thought him "in no way corrupt, but a good justice," and adding "as many compliments as if he had meant to hang him with a silken halter."* Thus the Lord Chief Justice was, in his fortunes, remarks a contemporary, affected as it were with "an ague which has an alternate bad and good day."† The next report was that Coke was "quite off the hooks," and that orders had been sent to give him a *supersedeas*; the jest of the moment being that four P's had lost him his place—Pride, Prohibitions, Præmunire, and Prerogative. The blow was struck at last, and the most famous of English lawyers had the mortification of knowing that Sir Henry Montagu, who was appointed in his stead, went with great pomp to Westminster Hall, accompanied by many noblemen, to the number of "fifty horse, the whole fry of the Middle Temple, and swarms of lawyers and officers." This was the first instance in which the rapacity of the young favourite prevailed, by the intrusion of his own interests upon the royal ear, to the ruin of a great man.

The motives that had been at work in bringing about the unmerited disgrace of Coke were soon apparent, remarks Lord Campbell,‡ when it was known that his successor, before accepting his office, was obliged to bind himself to dispose of the chief clerkship for the benefit of Buckingham; and when it was seen that two trustees for him were ad-

* Nichols, p. 227.

† The same, from Birch's MS. p. 4172.

‡ "Lives of the Chief Justices," art. "Coke," vol. i. p. 287.

affords an illustration of James's homely diversions at his favourite place of sport—Newmarket. "We hear nothing from Newmarket, but that they devise all the means they can to make themselves merry, as of late there was a feast appointed at a farmhouse not far off, where every man should bring his dish. The king brought a great chine of beef; the Marquis of Hamilton four pigs, garnished with sausages; the Earl of Southampton two turkeys; another some partridges; and one, a whole trayful of buttered eggs: and so all passed very pleasantly."* Another letter of the same gossiping writer speaks of a new and very expensive kind of diversion:—"The king came hither (Sir John Croft's, near Bury) the Saturday before Shrovetide, and the two days following there was much feasting and jollity; and the Christmas masque repeated on Shrove Tuesday night. On Saturday last the prince made a ball and a banquet at Denmark House, which he had lost at tennis to the Marquis of Buckingham, who invited thither a number of ladies, mistresses, and valentines, a ceremony come lately in request, and grown so costly that it is said he hath cast away this year 2000*l.* that way, among whom a daughter of Sir John Croft, that is unmarried, had a carcanet of 800*l.* for her share; and the king is so pleased with the whole society of those sisters, that he extols them, and hath bespoken them for the court against next Christmas. The banquet at Denmark House was so plentiful that it cost 100*l.*, and all the women came away, as it were, laden with sweetmeats; but supper there was none, save what the Lord of Purbeck made to his private friends."†

Buckingham usually kept high and stately festival on the recurrence of the anniversary of his patron saint. On St. George's Day in this year we find an instance recorded of his princely liberality to no fewer than fifty members of his household. He presented forty of his gentlemen with fifty pounds a piece "to provide themselves," and twenty pounds to ten of his women, besides a hundred pounds to treat them with

* *Mt. Charles's to Sir D. Eslet, 2 Nov. 28, 1618. Inedited State Papers.*

† *Inedited State Papers, Feb. 26, 1619/20.*

a supper and a play on the following night, at the Mitre in Fleet Street. Had not the munificent favourite's retinue been limited by a recent law, like the rest of the nobility, to fifty followers, his largess, doubtless, would have been commensurate with their larger number.

The magnificence of Buckingham was at least equal to his brilliant fortunes. Imagination can conceive nothing more splendid than the entertainments, the equipages, and even the personal appearance of this darling of fortune. But ostentation soon began to show itself like a canker at the core, when "his greatness was a-ripening." "It was common with him," we are told,* "at an ordinary dancing, to have his clothes trimmed with great diamond buttons, and to have diamond hat-bands, cockades, and ear-rings; to be yoked with great and manifold ropes and knots of pearl; in short, to be manacled, fettered, and imprisoned in jewels." Buckingham was the first person in England who was carried about in a sedan-chair, supported on men's shoulders.* This innovation upon the ordinary mode of locomotion greatly offended the Londoners; the vulgar attributing it to his high-blown pride, and railing at him as he passed through the streets, "loathing," says Arthur Wilson, "that men should be brought to as servile condition as horses." But when the newly-made marquis boldly aired his grandeur abroad, enthroned as it were in a coach of state, and "began to draw" with six instead of two horses, such overweening assumption outraged all ranks of society, and greatly increased his unpopularity. On the fact reaching the old Earl of Northumberland in his prison in the Tower—where he had been long confined on bare suspicion of being concerned in the Gunpowder Plot—he swore that should he ever regain his freedom, he would surpass in equipage James's upstart minion. The "stout" earl's health, but not his high spirit, had been injured by the tedious incarceration. When, there-

* Sedan-chairs, Evelyn tells us in his "Diary," were first brought to this country by Sir Saunders Duncombe. This person, who was gentleman pensioner to Kings James and Charles I., is said to have taken out a patent in 1631.

on the score of his youth and inexperience, and at length accepted with conscientious and unaffected reluctance. This great charge he held for the remainder of his short life; and it served to call forth in him eventually such an amount of energy and ability in the restoration if not creation of a navy, as to excite regret in men of competent judgment that the High Admiral had not been bred, or at least trained to, the rare and valuable qualities of diplomacy and statesmanship.

Anne of Denmark, who had been languishing for some time past in "a lingering sickness and fulness of humours which brought her to a dropsy," died at Hampton Court on the first of March, shortly after taking a last farewell of her favourite son, Prince Charles. That woman, so high-spirited and turbulent in the heyday of her restless passions and disappointed ambition, seems voluntarily to have resigned the vanities of the world, and to have exchanged the frivolities of Somerset House* and Whitehall for the peaceful seclusion of Hampton and Greenwich. Death, however, surprised the queen ere she could make a formal will, though Dr. Mayerne had apprised her twenty-four hours previously that she could not long survive. The non-existence of a testamentary document occasioned the strangest confusion in her household, and extraordinary delay in the interment of her remains. It affords, too, a striking illustration of the chronic disorder pervading the domestic and financial arrangements of this royal family, as well as the corrupt and sordid spirit of all concerned in the queen's obsequies, that although she left behind her jewels valued at 100,000*l.*, plate worth 90,000*l.*, and 80,000*l.* in gold Jacobuses, with a costly wardrobe besides, her body was left unburied till the 14th of May, an interval of more than ten weeks, because having died intestate, and ready money not being forthcoming through disputed succession, double prices were demanded by those whose function it was to furnish forth her funeral. Touching this strange passage in royal domestic history, Howell also says, in one of his amusing letters: "Queen Anne is lately dead

* Then called *Denmark House*, in honour of the country which gave her birth.

of a dropsy, which is held to be one of the fatal events that followed the last fearful comet. She left a world of brave jewels behind; but one Piero, an outlandish man, who had the keeping of them, embezzled many, and is run away. She left all she had to Prince Charles, whom she ever loved best of all her children." The bequest of all her personal property to the Prince of Wales, with the exception of a casket of valuables to her daughter the Queen of Bohemia, and a jewel to the King of Denmark, only being made verbally during her last moments, led to the disgraceful state of things we are describing. Meanwhile, some excuse may be made for James, who, himself dangerously ill of an agonizing disease, had been carried away to Theobalds by Buckingham in a Neapolitan sedan presented for the purpose by Lady Hatton. Notwithstanding all this confusion and scarcity of money, the funeral ceremonies were ordered to be conducted on a scale so expensive that it was found necessary to coin three batches of the late queen's plate ere they could be carried out. Money was not even forthcoming to provide the king's and prince's servants with mourning. But at length, the plate being coined and the programme settled, the melancholy affair was accomplished, and on the 14th of May the body of Queen Anne was conveyed from Somerset House—then the temporary resting-place for the remains of the great, between the chamber of death and their last home—and finally interred at Westminster; Prince Charles riding before the hearse, and Buckingham's place as pall-bearer being allotted by proxy to the Earl of Rutland, the marquis remaining at Theobalds with his royal master. Yet after all this unseemly delay, together with an interminable wrangling for privilege and precedence among the countesses and other lady mourners who were to figure in the procession, the funeral turned out to be, we are told, "a poor, drawling sight."

What the king's feelings were at the loss of his consort it is not easy to discover; for they had long lived apart, with separate residences and separate households. Harris says, that though she died without much lamentation from

appears to have been well known; for, to the king's great delight, Jonson, in one of his masques ("The Gipsies") performed before the court, complimented James on this mark of parental solicitude in the following lines of a speech addressed by Buckingham to his "dear dad, James Rex," in the guise of a wandering Bohemian:—

"You're a man of good means, and have territories store,
Both by sea and by land; and were born, sir, to more;
Which you, like a lord, and the prince of your peace,
Content with your havings, despise to increase:
You live chaste and single, and have buried your wife,
And mean not to marry by the line of your life.
Whence he that conjectures your quality, learns
You're an honest good man, and take care of your barns."

The story of Buckingham's marriage is involved in much mystery, and it likewise partakes largely of the romantic, like so many other passages of his extraordinary life. The young lady chosen by the favourite—and judiciously chosen, as the sequel showed—to share his titles and fortunes, was the heiress of Belvoir, Lady Katherine Manners, daughter of the sixth Earl of Rutland, a nobleman of great wealth and ancient descent.* The quality of ancestral nobility in a wife was a matter of no slight importance to the young marquis, and secondary only to that of large possessions, through the circumstance of the unexampled rapidity of his own rise at court and the newness of the titles he bore. Lady Katherine, besides being the wealthiest heiress in the realm, was possessed of considerable personal attractions, wit, and spirit. She was the only child of the earl by his first wife, Frances, widow of Sir William Beville, of Kilkhampton, Cornwall. Shortly after this lady's death, the earl contracted a second marriage with a daughter of the Earl of Thanet and widow of Sir Henry Hungerford. Two sons born of this union had died in their childhood, as it was fully believed in

* The Henry, 1st earl
was a line and who married
Anne St. 6th Earl of Rut-
land of that family, was grandson of Thomas the first earl, who was the son of
Anne St. Leger, whom to her, Anne Plantagenet (widow of Holland, Duke of
Brieter), was sister of Edward IV. and Richard III.

that age of ignorance and credulity, from the diabolical effects of witchcraft and sorcery practised upon them by three of the earl's domestics, Joan Flower and her two daughters. These women had been discharged from household service at Belvoir Castle for misconduct, and out of a malignant spirit of revenge had pretended to exercise over the earl's children every spell and incantation for harm and torture the "black art" could devise.* In 1613, the eldest of the boys, Henry Lord Roos, had fallen a victim to these practices, or, what is more probable, to his childish terrors induced by them. Lady Katherine, too, had been a sufferer, as had also her younger brother, but her stronger sense and spirit, or perhaps superior health, served to carry her through an ordeal under which her brothers had succumbed; if, indeed, the chief cause of their decease was not the "falling sickness," as had been reported. A circumstance calculated to cast much doubt over this dark affair is, that the accused women were not apprehended until five years after the period of the imputed crime; yet upon rigorous examination they were committed to Lincoln gaol. Joan, the mother, died on her way thither, whilst wishing the bread and butter she was eating might choke her if she were guilty. The two daughters were tried, confessed their guilt, and were executed at Lincoln.

This case of witchcraft is historically curious, as having, it is said, converted King James, who was previously sceptical, to a belief in the existence of those "detestable slaves of the devil, the witches," as he himself styled them when he dignified the subject with his pen in that remarkable work on *Dæmonology*. It is amusing also to perceive how little superior the learned monarch was to the idle superstitions of the day, when we find his majesty inveighing against the "damnable opinions of one Scot,† an Englishman, who," he informs us, "is not ashamed to deny in public print that there be such a thing as witchcraft, *and so maintains the old error of the Sadducees in denying of spirits.*" Such an

* Granger, art. "Rutland."

† Reginald Scot, "Discovery of Witchcraft," 1602.

ceremony itself did not take place until the 16th of May, when it was gone through with great privacy at Lumley House, an old mansion built by Sir Thomas Wyatt in the reign of Henry VIII., on the site of the ancient monastery of Crutched Friars, near Tower Hill.

It appears singular enough to learn that the nuptial festivities of the most magnificent personage of the time should have been held thus privately in an obscure corner of the city, hard by the grim old prison-fortress, instead of within the courtly precincts of Whitehall; the reason assigned for such privacy being the untoward circumstances antecedent to the wedding. The reason, however, is hardly a valid one. The favourite, as we have seen, had previously entertained their majesties with masques and banquets at Whitehall Palace, and this happy event of the marriage had been brought about, not only with the sanction, but by the active though covert agency of the king. The marquis, it is true, as yet possessed no separate residence in London of his own—his apartments at Whitehall being allotted to him by virtue of the various offices he held in the royal household. That palace, however, was at this moment in a very dilapidated condition, and the Banqueting House, which had been recently burned down, was in course of re-erection by Inigo Jones. Overtures had been made to Bacon by Buckingham for the purchase of York House, in the Strand—formerly the residence of the Bishops of Norwich—on the site of which the marquis wished to build a palace; but for a long time Bacon resolutely refused to part with the old family mansion, saying, in answer to the favourite's messenger—"York House is the house wherein my father died, and wherein I first breathed, and there will I yield my breath, if it so please God."

VI.

THE DOWNFALL OF BACON, HOW BROUGHT ABOUT—FRIENDSHIP OF BACON AND BEN JONSON—THE GREAT SEAL GIVEN TO WILLIAMS, BISHOP OF LINCOLN—SCANDAL CONCERNING WILLIAMS AND THE COUNTESS OF BUCKINGHAM—FESTIVITIES AT BURLEIGH-ON-THE-HILL, THE FAVOURITE'S SEAT, ON THE OCCASION OF THE KING'S "PROGRESS" THITHER—BEN JONSON'S MASQUE OF THE "METAMORPHOSED GIPSIES" FIRST PRODUCED THERE—THE MASQUE ATTAINS ITS HIGHEST EXCELLENCE AT THIS PERIOD IN THE HANDS OF JONSON.

THE dogged refusal on the part of the Lord Chancellor to part with York House to the favourite—who could find no other mansion in London so suitable for his purpose—led, it is affirmed, to that prosecution for corruption which ended in Bacon's sudden downfall. The great lawyer, who had owed his own rapid advancement to Buckingham's influence, had for a long time reckoned that the protecting hand of the favourite would cover his venal offences. The great machine of the State had now fallen chiefly under his direction, but its mainspring was the Marquis of Buckingham. On the 27th of January, 1620, Bacon was created Viscount St. Albans with plenary investiture. While Lord Carew carried his robe before him, his young patron Buckingham held it up. The prosperous Lord Keeper proffered the king most hearty thanks for each successive step of his preferment—1st, for making him his solicitor; 2nd, his attorney; 3rd, a privy councillor; 4th, keeper of the great seal; 5th, chancellor; 6th, Baron Verulam; 7th, Viscount St. Albans—honours and emoluments procured for him wholly through the influence of Buckingham. But this sudden elevation in place, dignity, and confidence produced more than usual envy, and aggravated the feelings of his enemies, who were many. The old party of the disgraced Earl of Somerset,

was then, in the summer of that same year, a not disconsolate widower—to partake of the graceful hospitalities of its newly-wedded owners. It was on this occasion that Ben Jonson first produced his famous masque of “*The Metamorphosed Gipsies*,” and in it most wittily fooled our first Stuart with flattery to the top of his bent. The favourite not only liberally paid the poet-laureate for inditing the “injurious adulation,” but, disguised as king of the gipsies; became the mouthpiece for such fulsome panegyric as the following:—

“Could any doubt that saw this land
Or who you are, or what command
You have upon the state of things?
Or would not say you were let down
From heaven, on earth to be the crown
And top of all your neighbour kings?”

More truthfully, and with better point, he had previously said, on taking the royal hand—

“With you, lucky Lord, I begin:
I aim at the best, and I trow you are he.
Here’s some luck already, if I understand
The grounds of mine art; here’s a gentleman’s hand,
I’ll kiss it for luck’s sake, you shoud’l, by this line
Have a horse and a bound, but no part of a swine;
To hunt the brave stag, to too much for the swal
As the weal of your body and wealth of your thack.”

The royal match-maker having happily married his favourite, the paramount business on hand was to secure a fitting wife for “*Baby Charles*,” and James’s eyes now entirely turned towards Spain. The contemplated marriage of the Prince of Wales with the infanta being therefore the most interesting topic of the hour, was thus touched upon by Viscount Purbeck, brother of the marquis, also clad in gipsy attire:—

“As my captain hath begun
With the are, I take the an!
Your hand, or!

* *Gipsy* was an animal of which James had a more than judicial abhorrence.

Of your fortune be secure,
Love and she are both at your
 Command, sir!
See what States are here at strife,
Who shall tender you a wife,
 A brave one!
And a fitter for a man
Than is offered here, you can
 Not have one.
She is sister of a star,*
One, the noblest that now are,
 Bright Hesper;
Whom the Indians in the East
Phosphor call, and in the West
 Hight Vesper.
Courses even with the sun
Doth her mighty brother run
 For splendour."†

Song and dance having intervened, the noble hostess was next addressed thus facetiously :—

“But, lady, either I am tipsy,
Or you are in love with a gipsy;
Blush not, Dame Kate,
For early or late,
I do assure you it will be your fate;
Nor need you once be ashamed of it, madam,
He’s as handsome a man as ever was Adam.”

After the three matronly Countesses of Rutland, Exeter, and Buckingham had been severally complimented in oracular verse, the fair but frail Lady Purbeck, who some three years afterwards fled from her husband, never to return, became the subject of Ben's laudation :—

“Help me, woman, here’s a book,
Where I would for ever look ;
Never yet did gipsy trace
Such true lines in hands or face.
Venus here doth Saturn move,
That you should be Queen of Love,
Only Cupid’s not content ;
For, though you do the theft disguise,
You have robb’d him of his eyes.”

As the sour and censorious Wilson calls her "a lady of

* Anne of Austria, her elder sister, queen of Louis XIII. of France.

† Alluding to the boast of the Spaniards that the sun never sets on their king's dominions.

been, in fact, greatly his inferiors in real learning and natural capacity.

On the king "progressing" from Burleigh to visit his favourite's father-in-law at Belvoir, he marked his departure by a really graceful leave-taking. Having noticed that there was promise of an heir being born before long to the house of Villiers, James, after uttering a fervent wish that all might go well, called upon the Bishop of London, by way of "Amen," to bestow his blessing upon the young couple, and offer up a prayer in his presence for the realization of their parental expectation.

VII.

LAUD'S RISE AT COURT—CHAPLAIN TO THE FAVOURITE—CEASELESS SCHEMES AND INTRIGUES OF THE COUNTESS OF BUCKINGHAM—HER INORDINATE RAPACITY—HER WITHDRAWAL FROM COURT—ITS CAUSE—ANNE OF DENMARK'S DIAMOND CHAIN—THE COUNTESS OPENLY RELAPSES TO POFFRY, AND RETIRES TO HER DOWER-HOUSE OF GOADBY.

THE rise of Laud at court, under the influence of the favourite, may now be traced by distinct steps. In 1621-2 he was preaching at court on the day of the king's accession, and "commanded to print." Shortly afterwards the king sent for him to converse and argue with him about the religious tenets of the Countess of Buckingham, who was then wavering on the subject of her faith.* Several interviews succeeded—for it was a subject upon which James delighted to show his learning—and in consequence, it may be presumed, of Laud's exertions in that cause, he became chaplain to the Marquis of Buckingham. For a time his efforts at conversion appear to have been crowned with success. The countess consented to receive the sacrament in the king's chapel, and *received a present*, according to common report, of 2000*l.* for her conformity.* Whether change of name by

* Nichols, vol. iv. p. 769.

marriage, change of place by interest, or change of religion by policy, it was all the same to her. Money seems to have been made the basis of almost every transaction in which this rapacious and intriguing woman was concerned.

On Suffolk being convicted, in 1619, of having, when Lord Treasurer, and in concert with his wife, trafficked with the public money, the earl and countess were heavily fined,* and the former deprived of his staff of office, which Buckingham at once put up for sale. Of bidders there were many, for it was known that a title would come with it. The successful competitor, however, was Montagu. He had been for the preceding three years Lord Chief Justice in the King's Bench, and Lady Buckingham, longing for the vacation of this post, that she might procure it for her creature James Ley, formerly King's Attorney in the Court of Wards, whom she would thus render a suitable husband for her dowerless niece, furthered Montagu's purpose in order to accomplish her own.

Even with aid like this, the treasurer's staff, and there-with the titles of Baron Kimbolton and Viscount Mandeville, were not purchased at a trifling cost. A score of thousand pounds was the price of an office which Lord Mandeville was not permitted to enjoy for one whole year. The price justified Bacon's joke in reference to it. When Montagu was on his way to the king at Newmarket, he visited Bacon, to whom he confided his expectation of returning with the coveted staff. The chancellor bade him take heed, "for wood is dearer at Newmarket than at any place in England." The white staff thus purchased in December, 1620, was taken from Lord Mandeville in September, 1621; or rather, at the latter date, a gentle but irresistible compulsion was put upon him to resign it. Mandeville, like Bacon, stood in the way of that hungry group of Lady Buckingham's fellows and followers, the Cranfields, Leys, Heaths, and Williamsses; and he suffered in the same storm which wrecked Bacon's fortune. At first the conspirators had meant to include the two illustrious friends in the same charge at the same time, and Sir George Paul had actually produced his motion against

* See Robert Carr, vol. i. p. 461, note.

public." But such shameless venality required the indignant lash of a Juvenal in lieu of the mild ridicule of a Massinger.

The whole matter was at length so thoroughly "ripped up," that the favourite found himself roughly exposed to the censure of the public voice, his half-brother, Sir Edward Villiers, being denounced as "deep in the mire" as Mompesson and Michell. Mompesson, who was summoned to appear before Parliament on the 3rd of March, 1621, would doubtless have paid the forfeit of his life for his share in these transactions, had not Buckingham aided him in effecting his escape to the Continent. Sir Edward Villiers was sent for safety on an embassy abroad. Michell, however, was brought to trial on the 3rd of May, found guilty, sentenced to a fine of 1000*l.*, and to be confined in Finsbury Prison during the king's pleasure. To such punishment was added that of his degradation as a knight. The curious "ceremonial of abasement" was minutely gone through in the presence of Buckingham and some of the highest persons of the realm. On the last day of Term the sheriffs of London brought the "Old Justice," as Michell was termed, to Westminster Hall, when, his sentence having been read in a loud voice by a pursuivant, his spurs were hewn in pieces by the Earl Marshal's servants, and thrown away; the silver sword was taken from his side, broken over his head, and the fragments cast under foot. Lastly, he was declared to be no longer a knight, but a knave; whilst Garter, Norroy, and Clarencieux, sitting at the feet of the commissioners, formally registered the process.

Meantime a hue and cry was raised after Sir Giles Mompesson, and the ports were watched; but it was too late, the favoured monopolist had crossed the Channel. Buckingham disclaimed before the commissioners having had any hand in the knight's escape, and threw the blame upon the referees who had pronounced upon the illegality of these patents.* In his absence, so heavy a fine was levied on the estate of Sir Giles, that an annuity of 200*l.* only was left for Lady Mompesson, whose dignity, however, was declared untainted.

* State Papers, vol. cxi. No. 13.

With what chagrin must the royal favourite have found himself thus identified with this hungry crew of detestable monopolists ! And how forcibly must those words of Bacon have recurred to his mind, when, some three years back, the Lord Keeper had advised him touching the "Inns and Osteries" patents, through the "singular love and affection he bore him," that his lordship, "whom God hath made in all things so fit to be beloved, would put off the envy of these things;" which, according to Bacon's judgment, "would bear no great fruit, and rather take the means for ceasing them than the note for maintaining them."*

In a venal age, and with a knowledge of all that had been done under shelter of James's prerogative, Buckingham may have sought excuse in a belief that such malpractices were sanctioned by precedent and by the example set him by the greater number of his contemporaries. He was surrounded by needy kinsmen, who regarded the speculation permitted by patents as a family perquisite, and moreover, influenced by an ambitious, unscrupulous mother. It has been truly said of this favourite that "he was less a man of evil intentions than of expediency." He was, too, of a persuadable disposition, and to his generosity, rashness, and extravagance must be attributed many of the perils which threatened the crown as well as himself from unconstitutional transactions. Like all persons of weak principles and impulsive nature, he was at once engaging and disappointing ; warm-hearted one instant, selfish the next ; the idol of his family, whom he befriended unceasingly ; the object during his life of his young wife's most devoted affection, which he often forgot or betrayed. Wilson, as might be expected, expatiates with much acrimony when he speaks of Buckingham's reputed amours ; and Peyton, of course, joins in the outcry against the unpopular duke. But perhaps the most ridiculous piece of scandal is that of Sir Symonds d'Ewes. After attacking the duke for his want of devotion, he tells

* Williams, then Dean of Westminster, and confidential adviser of the Duke, seems also to have warned him of the danger of monopolies, and other unconstitutional ways of raising money. "Oh, hearken not," he says, "to Rehoboam's earwigs."—Bishop Hacket's *Scrinia Reserata*. 1693.

living. "Cottington," said James, "here are Baby Charles and Stenny, who have a great mind to go by post into Spain and fetch home the infant, and will have but two more in their company, and have chosen you for one: what think you of the journey?" Cottington afterwards frequently mentioned that when this important question was put to him he trembled so violently he could with difficulty give utterance to his words. But the king peremptorily demanding his reply, Cottington told him, fairly and openly, that he believed such a step would be a death-blow to the completion of the match. He was convinced, he said, that when the Spaniards had the prince once in their hands they would immediately make new overtures and greatly increase their demands, especially as regarded the advancement of the Romish faith in England. On hearing this candid opinion, James, in the agony of his grief, actually threw himself on his bed, and breaking out into the most pitiable lamentations, exclaimed passionately that he was undone, and that he should lose Baby Charles for ever.

The prince and Buckingham were both extremely disconcerted. The latter, turning to Cottington, told him in an angry tone that the king had merely asked his advice as to the best mode of travelling in Spain, of which he was competent to give some opinion, but that he had presumed to offer his advice on matters of state; adding, that he should repent the impertinence as long as he lived. "Nay, by G—, Stenny," interrupted the king, "you are very much to blame to use him so. He answered me directly to the question I asked him, and very honestly and wisely; and yet you know he said no more than I told you before he was called in." Notwithstanding Cottington's opposition, the king kept his word, the journey was definitively settled, and Sir Francis himself was sent forward to provide a ship at Dover.

IX.

THE PRINCE AND THE FAVOURITE SET OUT IN DISGUISE FOR
THE CONTINENT—ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD.

ON the 17th of February, 1623, Prince Charles, retiring privately from court, proceeded to Buckingham's house at Newhall, in Essex. There had been, it appears, a formal leave-taking between the king and the adventurous travellers. James parted from them composedly, says Bishop Goodman, "and did then express no passion at all, for he was an excellent master of his own affections, if you would give him a little respite, and not take him suddenly. He carried himself as though there were no such thing intended, and so he took his journey through Kingston and Newmarket." On the day following, the prince passing as *Mr. John Smith*, and the marquis as *Mr. Thomas Smith*, having previously disguised themselves with false beards, set out from Newhall, accompanied by Sir Richard Graham, the favourite's Master of the Horse, and his own earliest friend, adviser, and confidant.

The trio had not ridden far ere a blunder was made which nearly arrested their progress. On crossing the river at Gravesend, for want of silver coin they flung a piece of gold to the ferryman, which "cast the poor fellow into such a melting tenderness that so good gentlemen should be going about some quarrel beyond seas," that he thought the best return he could make them for their liberality was to hint his suspicions to the authorities of the town. Information was instantly despatched to detain the travellers at Rochester; but they had passed through the city before it arrived. As the prince and his companion ascended the hill above Rochester, another mishap befel them through narrowly encountering the French ambassador, whose equi-

XI.

GAIETIES AND REJOICINGS IN HONOUR OF THE PRINCE OF WALES—THE RIGIDITY OF SPANISH ETIQUETTE STILL PRECLUDES CHARLES FROM PERSONAL INTERCOURSE WITH THE INFANTA—ROMANTIC ADVENTURE OF THE PRINCE TO OBTAIN A PRIVATE INTERVIEW WITH DONA MARIA—FEELING IN ENGLAND ON THE SUBJECT OF THE SPANISH MATCH—LAVISH GIFTS OF JEWELLERY TO THE SPANISH LADIES—INSOLENT LETTER OF BUCKINGHAM TO KING JAMES, ASKING FOR MORE JEWELS—SPANISH OPINION OF THE PRINCE, HIS FAVOURITE, AND HIS ENGLISH FOLLOWERS—BUCKINGHAM CREATED A DUKE.

ALL was gaiety and holiday now at the court of Spain, and the romance of the princely wooer was at length opened by a series of amusements and diversions planned with a view to enliven the interval of expectation created by the non-arrival of the long-deferred dispensation. Charles ran at the ring in presence of his mistress, and had the good fortune to carry it at the first course; and this chivalric achievement was one more auspicious omen. Although Castilian etiquette denied an interview with the infanta, this circumstance only served the more to inflame his enthusiastic passion. Charles seems really to have been in love with the infanta's person. At the court theatre Howell tells us he has seen him, as he describes the prince's enamoured reverie, "in a thoughtful speculative posture," with his eyes immovably fixed on his mistress for half an hour at a time. He watched her progress from church to church, and tracked her carriage through the streets; and Howell writes that he has known him to remain an hour in a close coach in a particular street, watching for the infanta to come abroad. The princess having gone one fine spring morning to a suburban retreat—the *Casa di Campo*, "to gather Maydew," the prince rose with the sun, and with only one companion,

Endymion Porter, contrived to gain access to the garden. Doña Maria was tracked to the orchard, to which a high wall and double-bolted door opposed access. Charles despising such impediments, scaled the wall, leaped down, and hastened towards her. The gentle infanta shrieked and fled. An old marquis, her guardian, falling on his knees, implored him to retire, adding that he would probably lose his head should he allow him to remain. The door was therefore unlocked, and the baffled wooer reluctantly departed.

This incident certainly proves that it was not his own fault that Charles did not address his mistress with all the fervour of youth and romance. The princess, on her part, appears to have been dazzled by the accomplishments of her suitor, and gratified by so chivalrous a courtship. On a subsequent occasion, when a private interview with the infanta was at last formally accorded to Buckingham, Secretary Cottington writes to King James from Madrid, on the 8th of April, 1623 :—"I was interpreter for my lord marquis when he spoke with the Infanta Doña Maria. She inquired for your majesty's health before she would hear anything else. But when my lord came to speak of the prince, she blushed extremely, and his highness hath since spoken with her himself (having often seen her), and likes her so well as, without all doubt, she will be with child before she gets into England."*

Meanwhile what did folks say at home in England on the subject of this Spanish match? It was at first hoped that the prince had gone anywhere but to Spain, "but those who so believed" had, it was said, "no ground but desire."† The truth was soon circulated. When the first surprise at a step so unusual among great princes was over, and the matter began to be duly weighed, the views of King James and the prejudices of the people of England were directly at variance. The latter had been long murmuring at the in-

* Dalrymple's "Memorials," p. 160.

† Ellis's "Letters Illustrative of English History," vol. iii., First Series, p. 216.

one that has gone, that she was well, and what she could do. But if you will pardon me this fault I will commit the like no more. She is very well, I thank God, and when she is set to her feet, and held by her sleeves, she will not go softly, but stamp, and set one foot before another very fast, and I think she will run before she can go. She loves dancing extremely, and when the saraband is played, she will get her thumb and finger together, offering to snap; and then, when 'Tom Duff' is sung, she will shake her apron; and when she hears the tune of the clapping dance my Lady Frances Hubert taught the prince, she will clap both her hands together, and on her breast, and she can tell the tunes as well as any of us can; and as they change the tunes she will change her dancing. I would you were here but to see her, for you would take much delight in her now she is so full of pretty play and tricks; and she has gotten a trick, that when they dance her, she will cry Hah! hah! and Nicholas will dance with his legs, and she will imitate him as well as she can. She will be excellent at a hat; for if one lay her down, she will kick her legs over her head; but when she is older I hope she will be more modest. Everybody says she grows every day more like you; you shall have her picture very shortly."*

In all her playful letters the duchess expresses the warmest affection for her husband, and she seems to have well merited the praise of Archbishop Laud, who has left her name to posterity in his diary as "that excellent lady who is goodness itself."

The favourite's conjugal fidelity was impugned by a scandalous accusation—openly discussed at this time, and which, for some years afterwards, remained current in Spain—that the origin of the enmity between Olivarez and Buckingham was an attempt made by the latter on the chastity of the Condessa. It is sufficient to observe of a story which has been embellished with very indelicate particulars, that the duke, as alleged, having thought proper to make the Condessa Olivarez

* *Wobop Goodman's "Memoirs,"* vol. I. p. 278.

the object of his addresses, the lady was so far from being flattered by the preference, that she divulged the circumstance to her husband. Such grave offence, it was said, did Buckingham's presumption give the jealous Don, that, in concert with his wife, he devised for the insolent Englishman the same punishment which the husband of *La belle Ferrière* had inflicted on Francis I. of France, and which also, according to Bishop Burnet, the Earl of Southesk attempted to inflict on James Duke of York, on discovering that he was the successful lover of Lady Southesk.*

Lord Clarendon, however, in spite of the numerous versions of this strange piece of scandal, has thrown considerable discredit over the story. "Though the duke," he says, "was naturally carried violently to those passions when there was any grace or beauty in the object, yet the Duchess of Olivarez was then a woman so old, past children, of so abject a presence, in a word, so crooked and deformed, that she could neither tempt his appetite nor magnify his revenge." A passage also in Bishop Hacket's "Life of Lord Keeper Williams" tends still further to invalidate the story. "There was a scandalous error," he says, "made table-talk in England, that our duke had attempted the chastity of the Condessa Olivarez. This is grossly contumacious. The lady was never solicited by Buckingham, as Sir Walter will testify in a postscript of a letter to the duke: 'The Condessa Olivarez bids me tell you that she kisseth your grace's hands, and does every day recommend you particularly by name in her prayers to God.'"

Though it is certain that Buckingham quitted Madrid without taking leave of the lady, the more probable cause of the ill-will between the two ministers seems attributable to the duke's impetuosity on a certain occasion, towards the close of his stay at that court, when Olivarez having insinuated that the duke had given some hope of the prince's conversion to Romanism, the haughty Spaniard—in violation of all diplomatic punctilio—to his great consternation, received *the*

* See Varillas, Louis Guyon, Bayle, &c., and Bishop Burnet's History of his own times.

joyous peal of bells enlivened the night with tidings of the return of the solitary hope of the nation. All eyes sought the idol of their hearts; the aged blessed the day they had lived to witness; public societies and private families offered up their religious thanks. At Guildhall a bonfire was kindled of forfeited logwood which cost a hundred pounds; while at St. Paul's a new anthem was sung, the words being taken from the 114th Psalm—"When Israel came out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from among the barbarous people?" Not the least interesting incident which marked this day of rejoicing was the reprieve of six men and two women whom the prince met on their road to Tyburn, whither they were going to execution.

Though James and his favourite kept their intentions with regard to Spain a profound secret, a general impression prevailed that the match with the infanta was virtually at an end. This unsuccessful termination, or rather Buckingham's share in procuring its miscarriage, rendered the duke for a short period the favourite also of the public and of the Parliament. They spoke openly of him as the "saviour of his country;" but, as so frequently happens to public men, from what has been happily termed "the lubricity of popular favour," the duke was destined to enjoy only a very brief continuance of their good graces.

Various causes had operated to hasten Buckingham's return from Spain besides weariness of Madrid life. Chief among them were, the serious indisposition of the duchess; certain injurious reports spread by "ungrateful devils" against his character; and moreover, the deranged state of his private affairs. The "poor fool Kate," as the king called her, had fallen into a state of "pining melancholy," brought on by his protracted absence, or, more probably, by the pangs of doubt arising from his alleged infidelities. Whilst in Spain he had engaged Sir John Suckling, with other friends, to examine into his pecuniary affairs, and their reports were far from satisfactory. His income they showed him to be, from land, offices, &c., 15,213*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* a year, while his expenditure was 11,700*l.* Out of this, 3000*l.* was allowed to

the duchess for housekeeping; 2000*l.* was granted to his mother, the Countess of Buckingham; and the chivalrous diversion of tilting was set down at no less than 1000*l.* a year. Touching his debts, the statement was anything but agreeable. When the duke went to Spain, they had amounted to 24,000*l.*, and were now increased to 29,400*l.*, various sums having been advanced to him whilst enacting the “magnifico” at the court of Spain. Of this heavy debt, however, 17,300*l.* had been cleared off by the sale of land, and 2500*l.* was to be applied to the same purpose from his Irish revenues; and his judicious friends now proposed similar means of discharging his remaining liabilities, which, they said, would otherwise ruin his estate. His revenue, they candidly told him, but little exceeded his expenditure; whereas, those who wish to leave a patrimony behind them do not spend more than two-thirds of their income.* Very sound advice, only the recipient was little likely to profit by it.

The impoverished James at this time had no ready money wherewith to help his embarrassed favourite; for the expenses of the visit to Madrid, together with some old scores of Buckingham, could only be met by extraordinary expedients—such as knighting a thousand gentlemen at a hundred pounds a piece, and ten or twelve serjeants-at-law at five hundred pounds a piece; but he gladly announced to him a present of 2000*l.* from the then flourishing East India Company. It is to be hoped that such sum was not extorted from those enterprising merchants in the shape of “a benevolence;” as the duke had now unlimited command over the “narrow seas,” and to his high office of Lord Admiral was now added that of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. The Commons, indeed, voted a sum of 300,000*l.*; but, at the king’s own proposition, this was paid to a committee of Parliament, and issued by them without being intrusted to Buckingham’s management.†

But amid all these difficulties and embarrassments, the star of Buckingham was still in the ascendant. With that

* “State Papers,” vol. cxlix. No. 91.

† Hume.

XVI.

THE FRENCH MATCH—PROPOSED ALLIANCE OF PRINCE CHARLES WITH HENRIETTA MARIA OF FRANCE—LORD KENSINGTON SENT INCOGNITO TO PARIS TO SOUND MARIE DE' MEDICI.—THE PROPOSAL RECEIVED WITH FAVOUR BY THE FRENCH COURT AND NATION—THE EARL OF CARLISLE GOES AS AMBASSADOR TO PARIS—THE MARRIAGE TREATY BROUGHT TO A STANDSTILL BY THE INTRIGUES OF CARDINAL RICHELIEU—FATAL ILLNESS OF KING JAMES.

By a series of "checks to the king" on the parliamentary chess-board, Buckingham had won the game against Bristol, and overthrown the treasurer, Middlesex. But this was not all. After these triumphs at home, he had to look abroad and to substitute a new influence in Europe for that which had ceased to be. In his new system, France was to fill up the vacancy of Spain, and the political marriage which had failed at Madrid was to be consummated at Paris. The movements of statesmen are not always complicate; and this was opening a fresh game with apparently very simple tactics.

As Hymen had now to lead the diplomatic corps, two ambassadors extraordinary, the perfect representations of Love himself, were selected by the volatile and impetuous minister of England. These graceful emissaries were two congenial friends—the Earl of Holland and the Earl of Carlisle; two courtiers "as accomplished as were to be found in the palaces of all the princes of Europe;" heroes of a drawing-room, personages to figure in a masque or a ballet, whose glittering and lovely forms were idolized by the women.

Henry Rich,* Lord Kensington, and, at the time of the French match, Earl of Holland, was, with the exception of the Duke of Buckingham, perhaps, the handsomest man

* Son of Robert, Lord Rich, by Penelope, sister of Robert Devereux, the unfortunate Earl of Essex.

of his time. On his first introduction to court he had despised James's favour in a very marked manner;* but on his return from the Low Country war, in which he served several campaigns as a volunteer, he applied himself with the utmost sedulity to the making of his fortune. He first cultivated a strict intimacy with Hay, Earl of Carlisle—yet in high favour, and whose liberality was proverbially profuse—began to prosper apace at court, but soon met with a dangerous rival in Buckingham. Having, however, sufficient good sense to perceive the improbability of being able to supersede the great favourite, he wisely contented himself with occupying the second place in the royal affections. He therefore courted the omnipotent Buckingham with the most submissive respect. "He took all the ways he could," says Lord Clarendon, "to endear himself to the duke and to his confidence, and wisely declined the receiving any grace or favour but as his donation: above all, avoided the suspicion that the king had any kindness for him on any account but of the duke, whose creature he desired to be esteemed, though the Earl of Carlisle's friend; and he prospered so well in that pretence that the king scarcely made more haste to advance the duke than the duke did to promote the other."

Buckingham, in his vehement friendship for Rich, had fixed that perfect courtier about the person of Prince Charles as gentleman of his bedchamber, and had thus secured at all times one who would protect his interest with the heir of the crown. He also "preferred him to a wife;"† and soon after he had followed Prince Charles and the duke to Madrid, at the period of the matrimonial visit. Lord Kensing-

* See Robert Carr, vol. i. p. 461.

† This lady—one of the richest heiresses in England—was Isabella, daughter of Sir Walter Cope, who brought with her, as part of her marriage portion, the manor and seat of Kensington. The family residence of the Copes, which now bears the name of Holland House, had been built by her father in 1607; and Rich, on being advanced to a barony, in 1622, took Holland as his title. It was afterwards purchased by Henry Fox, who from this circumstance assumed the title of Baron Holland, on his elevation to the peerage in 1762. King James is said to have conferred on Rich, within a few years, nearly 150,000*l*.

Established Church—was contrary to the laws of England, and they would never consent to it. The French then appeal to the Spanish treaty, and they declare that their princess is not to be treated for on inferior terms than the infanta. The distressed negotiators looked on each other with dismay. Both sides seemed to dread a renewal of the seven years' treaty of Madrid. The queen-mother had openly said, "*Qu'il meritoit d'être lapidé qui s'y opposeroit.*" Conferences multiplied, difficulties were debated, and Buckingham, irritated beyond measure, was on the eve of going to France himself as ambassador to marry the young princess by proxy, but was detained by the continued illness of James.

In the midst of the harassing affairs connected with the French match and preparation for war with Spain, the disorder of the king began to assume a formidable appearance. In the spring of 1625, a chronic internal disease, aggravated by an attack of tertian ague, left little hope of recovery. In March, his sickness from ague had taken an intermittent form, and though there had been an apparent abatement in the earlier part of the month, on the 16th he had his seventh fit of that debilitating disease, and this was followed by a fever, which proved fatal

XVII.

DEATH OF KING JAMES—BUCKINGHAM ACCUSED OF POISONING THE KING—CONTEMPORANEOUS OPINIONS RELATIVE TO SUCH CHARGE BROUGHT AGAINST THE FAVOURITE AND HIS MOTHER, THE COUNTESS OF BUCKINGHAM—SOLUTION OF THE MYSTERY.

JAMES was not permitted to witness the realization of the long-cherished hopes of the union of his only son with a princess of equal birth, a daughter of the great Henri of France. During his last sufferings, negotiations were still

diligently carried on through Buckingham and Carlisle, but as early as the 15th of March the duke, evidently in expectation of the king's demise, wrote to Lord Carlisle "to have his eyes open, and to state any course, as much as he could, which might hinder the business of the Palatinate and of the religion," until *he* (the duke) appeared in the French capital.

Feeling his strength declining, James sent for Prince Charles, whom he retained in conversation for three hours. He solemnly exhorted him to fix his thoughts on religion, to uphold the Church of England, and to take the Palatine under his protection. The points on which the king admonished his son must have been communicated by the prince himself, since we find, by a letter of the time, that in order that the conversation might be secret,* not a single person was admitted within the distance of two or three rooms. On the 24th of March, the king's fever having continued for ten days, and "exercised much violence on a weak body," though on that day he had slept well and taken broths, "the king," writes Mr. Secretary Conway to Lord Carlisle from Theobalds, "did, with life and cheerfulness, receive the sacrament in the presence of the prince and duke and many others." A little before break of day, on the Sunday, James expressed a wish to have another interview with Prince Charles, who instantly rose and came in his night-dress to the king's bedside. The dying monarch endeavoured to raise himself on his pillow, as if he had something of importance to impart, but by this time his speech was inaudible. In his last moments, however, when the prayer commonly used at the hour of death was concluded, he repeated once or twice the words *Veni, Domine Jesu*, and shortly afterwards ceased to breathe without any appearance of pain.† The Lord Keeper closed the king's eyes with his own hand.

A malicious rumour was raised that James's death was purposely accelerated by a certain plaister applied to his breast, and a certain powder given him in wine by the

* Ellis's "Original Letters," vol. iii. p. 182.

† Spotswood. Echard. Howell's Letters. Wilson.

a statement made by Sanderson, 'on the authority of Sir Balthasar Gerbier, that when Eglisham offered to publish a recantation of his scandalous pamphlet, for a certain remuneration, the duke listened to the overture with indignation and disgust.* That Buckingham, indeed, should have joined in so detestable a conspiracy, notwithstanding his many faults, is in utter contradiction to all our preconceived notions of his character.

One of the articles of impeachment against the duke in the succeeding reign was, *not* for having actually poisoned the king, but for having dared to administer remedies to the sovereign without the concurrence of the physicians. Therein, doubtless, lay his only fault, and therein may be found a solution of the whole mystery. A kind intention on the part of Buckingham and his mother was, from professional jealousy on the part of the doctors, tortured into an attempt by poison upon the existence of King James. Charles, as is well known, to prevent the scandal which would be occasioned by a public investigation of the duke's conduct, braved the wrath of the Commons, and dissolved Parliament. The imputation, nevertheless, whatever its origin, followed him through life.

This absurd and wicked charge was revived by the republican party in the House of Commons on the 21th of February, 1648. As the attack was idle, it fell harmless, and alone reflected discredit on the maligners.

* "*Reliquie Wottonianæ*," p. 177; Sanderson, p. 593.

XVIII.

ACCESSION OF CHARLES I.—BUCKINGHAM CONFIRMED IN FAVOUR
—FATAL ERROR OF CHARLES AND THE FAVOURITE IN WEAK-
ENING THE CROWN BY OBTAINING IMPEACHMENTS—THE
STATE OF ENGLAND ON CHARLES ASCENDING THE THRONE
—THE FRENCH MATCH CONCLUDED—CEREMONIAL OF THE
ESPOUSALS.

THE accession of the youthful Charles to the English throne, with all the prodigal hopes of sovereignty, proved a death-blow to the enemies of Buckingham. It was soon seen that henceforth he would be still more firmly established in his exalted fortunes. It had been expected, and very reasonably, that the prince, on succeeding to the kingly rule, would have diminished the extent of the favourite's power. Politicians trusted for this to the cool and sober judgment which they knew Charles to possess; the courtiers and other high-spirited men to his resentment on the score of the duke's insolence; the people conceived that the prince had endured him out of a dutiful respect to James's foibles, and would now give him up. All, however were disappointed. Charles not only renewed, but increased the measure of his favour. An attachment, when once formed by him, always remained unshaken to the last. When the tide of public opinion set strongest against the favourite; when the Parliament was threatening him with impeachment, and the sailors clamouring for their wages at his doors; when the suspicions of his having poisoned the late king were industriously propagated by his enemies and universally believed by the vulgar, Charles, at the risk of his own popularity, and indeed almost of his throne, still clung to and supported his friend. The fact is well known, that at the very same time that the Commons were preferring articles against Buckingham, the king went so far as to show his contempt of their proceedings, and his love for his favourite, by recommending the University of Cambridge to elect the duke as its Chancellor. This

speaking, as it was certain to be costly, the fault was rather attributed to the vanity and prodigality of the minister than to the thoughtless extravagance of the monarch.

XIX.

BUCKINGHAM GOES TO PARIS TO CONDUCT HENRIETTA MARIA TO ENGLAND—HIS MAGNIFICENT RETINUE—HOSPITABLE RECEPTION BY THE FRENCH COURT AND NOBILITY—HE BECOMES ENAMOURED OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA—THE QUEEN'S FAVOURITE, MADAME CHEVREUSE, ABETS BUCKINGHAM IN HIS MAD PASSION—PLATONIC ATTACHMENTS AND L'HONNÊTE GALANTERIE—DISGUISES ASSUMED BY BUCKINGHAM IN ORDER TO APPROACH THE QUEEN-CONSORT—BUCKINGHAM OFFENDS THE FRENCH COURTIER'S BY A DISPLAY OF PRODIGAL LIBERALITY.

WITH renewed health, sovereign power at his back, and revelling in fresh honours and graces, the fortunate favourite took his departure with extraordinary pomp for Paris, for the purpose of conducting the charming daughter of Henry the Great to the expectant arms of the young King of England.

Fully aware of the curious felicity exhibited by the French courtiers in dress, appointments, and equipages from having formed his own early taste in their refined school of fashion, the gay duke determined on the occasion of this joyous mission to outvie all his previous doings in superb excess, and, if possible, distance all competitors in magnificence in the eyes of the three queens at the Louvre. Such a regal retinue had never before been displayed by a subject in our annals, save in two memorable instances—those of Becket and Wolsey. But the cumbrous grandeur of their parade could bear no comparison with the order and brilliancy of the duke's following. Eight noblemen, headed by the young Marquis of Hamilton and his father-in-law, the Earl of Denbigh, were associated with six gentlemen of noble fami-

lies, and twenty-four knights of great worth, all of "whom carried six or seven pages a piece, and as many footmen," the train amounting to six or seven hundred. Nor were these all. Twenty privy gentlemen, seven grooms of his chambers, thirty chief women, and two master cooks were among the more important functionaries who attended upon his Grace of Buckingham. Three rich suits a piece were given to each of these persons. The inferior servants for the household numbered twenty-five second cooks, fourteen women of the second rank, seventeen grooms to attend upon those yeomen, forty-five labourers, cellarers belonging to the kitchen, twelve pages, twenty-four footmen, six huntsmen, and twelve grooms. Most of these subordinates were provided with three rich suits a piece, and to complete this department, there were six riders with one suit a piece, and eight others to attend the stable business.

The duke's equipages numbered three rich coaches, lined inside with velvet, and covered all over externally with gold lace. Eight horses and six coachmen were allotted to each coach, and before leaving London he had despatched his grooms with fifty geldings and nags, and twelve coach horses. Then there were my lord duke's watermen, twenty-two in number, suited in sky-coloured taffety, all gilded with anchors and my lord's arms, and lastly, a band of musicians, *eight score* in number, "all richly suited." The whole of this suite, we are told, was maintained "at his grace's charge."*

To eclipse the Duke de Chevreuse in jewelled raiment—who, as proxy for Charles, had blazed with diamonds at the espousals—Buckingham went provided with all the jewels of the crown for his personal adornment. De Chevreuse had married the young widow of the favourite De Luynes, who, when the Nemesis overtook the Marquis d'Ancre and his wife for their complicity in the murder of Henry IV., had become possessor of the confiscated diamonds and parures of the Florentine parvenus, and which exceeded in value and beauty those even of their patroness, Marie de' Medici. Oldyst

* Ellis, "Orig. Letters," 1st series, vol. i. p. 189. † "Life of Raleigh."

no means satisfied the impulsive aspirations of her impetuous lover. He bent all his efforts, therefore, to obtain a private interview; but the queen was too narrowly watched to render *that* a matter of easy accomplishment even by so able a tactician in back-stairs manœuvres as the arch and unscrupulous duchess. When every other stratagem had either failed or been rejected, the very opportune device of giving a fête and masqued ball at her hotel, in honour of the royal nuptials, occurred to Madame de Chevreuse. The invitation was given and accepted; and the moody Louis, perceiving that to absent himself would be an insult to the King and Queen of England, or probably unwilling to leave his consort exposed, under the roof of a woman he distrusted and detested, to the familiar attentions either of the handsome envoy—who had become the idol of all the women at court, from the queen down to the maid of honour—or of his brother Gaston, of whom he was then very jealous, he not only signified his intention of accompanying his consort thither, but presented her with a costly shoulder-knot, ornamented with twelve diamond tags, to wear on the occasion.

As previously planned, Buckingham, during the evening, assumed various disguises, danced in a ballet of demons, and having purchased the complaisance of the Chevalier de Guise* by a loan of three thousand pistoles and the diamonds of the English crown, appeared as his substitute in a masque in which the princes of the sovereign houses of France were to represent the oriental kings doing homage to Louis and his queen. In this disguise, he was selected by Anne of Austria as her partner in the dance, and had full opportunity, amid the noise and hurry of the festival, to pour into her ear a tale of passion, for which Madame de Chevreuse had, without doubt, fully prepared her.

The salient topic of court gossip on the following day was the various disguises assumed by Buckingham during the festivities at the Hôtel de Chevreuse, and it aroused the suspicion and doubled the vigilance of Richelieu; who, readily

* Son of Henry of Lorraine, Duke de Guise, assassinated at the States of Blois, and younger brother of the Duke de Chevreuse.

guessing that the intriguing duchess was the confidante and accomplice of this mad passion, kept Argus-eyed watch and ward alike over the queen, her favourite, and his rival, the envoy-lover. This surveillance rendered the suit of the adventurous duke so desperate that he resolved to attempt any means, however hazardous, which afforded a prospect of seeing the queen, once at least, in private. The moments that yet remained of Buckingham's stay in Paris were few and precious. The only scheme which could be devised—whether with Anne of Austria's consent is not clear—was to introduce him into her apartments in the garb of a phantom, reputed to have haunted the Louvre for centuries, and known by the appellation of the *White Lady*. Here was a piece of frolic after the duchess's own heart. Through her bold and expert agency this wild scheme was actually accomplished; but the palpitating adorer in spectral weeds had scarcely been closeted five minutes with the queen ere an alarm was raised of the approach of Louis the Just, and the duke was forced to beat a rapid retreat by a private staircase. This fresh apparition of the *White Lady*—who had not succeeded in leaving the Louvre unobserved—raised no suspicion in the king's mind, as he placed firm faith in the tradition; but Richelieu was not so easily deceived; and he soon ascertained through his agents that the advent of the phantom of the *White Lady* was only another device of Buckingham's clever hostess.

Buckingham was in despair. Despatches had arrived from the impatient Charles Stuart to hasten with his young bride to Dover; the homeward journey must be commenced at the furthest in two days, and no ingenuity could now suffice to prolong his sojourn in the French capital. At the expiration of that time the court consequently—with the exception of the king, who fell ill—started for Amiens, for so far were Marie de' Medici and Anne of Austria to conduct Queen Henrietta Maria; and in that city the interview so ardently coveted by the enamoured duke was destined to take place.

Before he quitted Paris, Buckingham contrived to offend

dently rendered his leave-taking with Anne of Austria so conspicuous that it served to strengthen all the prejudices which had been excited against her; while, overcome probably by the memories of the past and anticipations of the future, she, on her side, lost all her self-possession, and remained drowned in tears during the return to Amiens. This want of caution was the more imprudent that she travelled in the same carriage with the queen-mother, the Princess de Conti, and a lady of the court, and thus exposed herself to suspicions which, without doubt, outran the truth.

When Buckingham had reached Boulogne with his royal charge, either unable to bear the pangs of absence, or actuated by the impulse of the moment, he resolved to return to Amiens, and once more, if possible, to behold his *inamorata*, if it were but for a moment. The elements proved favourable to his passion. The prevalence of high winds had rendered the sea so rough as to preclude all possibility of the immediate embarkation of Queen Henrietta Maria. Anne of Austria had unquestionably learned from the Duchess de Chevreuse the strong desire felt by Buckingham to revisit Amiens, and see her once again, before setting sail; and that the feeling was reciprocated he had soon ample proof by the arrival of La Porte at Boulogne—ostensibly to inquire after Henrietta Maria and the Duchess de Chevreuse, by whom that young queen was to be accompanied to England.

It needed little discernment on the part of the suite after what had passed to decide that the official inquiry of Anne's messenger by no means laid bare the whole of his mission; but the exact nature of his duties never transpired. The rough weather lasted for eight days, and during that interval La Porte made three journeys to the coast. "I came and I returned," says he, "I carried letters to Madame de Chevreuse, and returned with her replies, which appeared to be of the utmost consequence, because Queen Anne ordered M. the Duc de Chaulnes to take care that the gates of Amiens were never closed, so that I might not be delayed at any hour, even in the night."*

* "Mémoires Particuliers."

The duke alleged, as a reason for leaving the queen-consort of his royal master at Boulogne, that the receipt of a despatch from King Charles would oblige him to have another conference with the queen-mother; and that he should leave Boulogne three hours after the queen's messenger; moreover, he urgently implored Anne of Austria, in the name of the love he bore her, to afford him an opportunity of taking a final leave of "the fairest vision which had ever gladdened his sight."

The request produced a conflict of feeling in the young queen's mind. She well knew the fearless and headstrong character of her English adorer, and felt too late the danger to which her unmeasured condescension had subjected her. Only a few hours remained for her decision; and pressed by the consciousness of the fresh peril to which she was exposed, and, it may be, also by her innate feeling of tenderness for the duke, she determined at once to feign a sudden indisposition, and to request her ladies to withdraw in consequence. Her project, however, was nearly rendered abortive by the entrance of Nogent Bautru,* who publicly announced the arrival of the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Holland to treat on some affair of importance with the queen-mother.

In this dilemma, Anne of Austria felt that she had no other alternative but to play out her personage to the end; and accordingly she lost no time in sending for her physician Ribéra and causing herself to be bled; but despite her entreaties, and almost her commands, she could not get rid of the attendance of an old lady of honour, the Countess of Lannoi, who had seated herself in the queen's arm-chair and persisted in watching by her bedside. Finding that she was resolved on fulfilling the duties of her office to the letter, and having already occasion to suspect that the zealous countess was in the interest of the cardinal, the young queen did not venture to insist on her obedience, and therefore was compelled to await, in increased anxiety, the issue of the adventure.

* Nicholas Bautru, Count de Nogent, was jester in the court of Anne of Austria.

repelling duenna could have been selected. The *surveillance* was complete.

Coupled with this open persecution, a secret conspiracy was in action against Anne of Austria, of which she had no suspicion. Madame de Lannoi, the zealous spy of the cardinal, had detected the disappearance of the diamond shoulder-knot from the queen's casket; and, with the ready perception of malice, she suggested to Richelieu that it had in all probability been sent to Buckingham as a parting present. The cardinal lost not an instant in writing to one of the ladies of Charles's court, who was in his interest—for, like the spider, he attached his web on every side—offering to present her with fifty thousand livres if she could succeed in cutting away a couple of the tags of the shoulder-knot the first time that Buckingham appeared with it, and forwarding them forthwith by a safe messenger to himself.

A fortnight afterwards the two tags were in the possession of Richelieu. The duke had worn the aiguillette at a state-ball, and the emissary of the cardinal had cut away a couple of its pendants unobserved. The vindictive minister gloated over his prize as he now believed his revenge was certain.

The first care of Richelieu was to carry the diamonds to the king, and to acquaint him with the method by which they had been procured. Louis examined them closely. There could be no doubt that they had indeed formed a portion of the ornament which had been his last present to his wife. His pale brow flushed with indignant rage, and before the cardinal left the royal closet every precaution was taken to ensure the speedy exposure of the queen.

On the following morning Louis himself announced to Anne of Austria that a ball, given by the civil magistrate of Paris at the town-hall, would take place the day but one following, and he coupled this information with the request that, in order to compliment both himself and the magistrate, she would appear wearing the aiguillette which he had lately presented to her. She replied simply and calmly that he should be obeyed.

The eight-and-forty hours which were still to intervene

before his vengeance could be accomplished appeared so many centuries to the cardinal-duke. Anne of Austria was now fairly in the toils, and still her composure remained unruffled. How was this seeming tranquillity to be explained? Richelieu had already experienced that, aided by Buckingham and Madame de Chevreuse, she had possessed the power to baffle even *his* ingenuity; but she now stood alone; and even had she resolved to venture on so dangerous a step as that of replacing the jewels, he well knew that on the present occasion she possessed neither the time nor the means.

The evening of the festival at length came, and as it had been arranged that the king should first make his entrance into the ball room, accompanied by his minister, and that the queen should follow, attended by her own court, Richelieu was enabled to calculate upon commencing his triumph from the very moment of her appearance upon the threshold.

Precisely an hour before midnight the queen was announced, and every eye at once turned eagerly towards her. The youthful consort of Louis the Just was radiant alike in loveliness and apparel. She wore a Spanish costume—a robe of green satin, curiously embroidered with gold and silver, having hanging sleeves looped back with large rubies serving as buttons. Her ruff was open, and displayed her bosom, which was extremely beautiful, and upon her head she had a small cap of green velvet surmounted by a heron-feather while from her white shoulder depended gracefully the aigillette, with its twelve diamond tags.

As Anne entered the king approached her, avowedly to offer his compliments upon her brilliant appearance, but actually to count the tags. Count as he might his arithmetic could make neither more nor less than a dozen. The cardinal stood a pace behind him quivering with rage. The twelve tags were hanging from the queen's shoulder, and nevertheless he grasped two of them in his hand at the same moment. Aye, in his hand, for he had resolved not to lose an instant in triumphing over the proud and insolent beauty who had laughed his passion to scorn, and made him a mark

woman, Mrs. Olivia Porter—"I do not doubt but what we shall be merry again in York House. Fairfill is now sould, I thank God, and we shall, by living here a while, redeem our selves out of debt, I hope in Jesus. Farewell, sweet cusen,

"Your most constant friend,

"K. BUCKINGHAM.

"Burghley, 18th July, 1625."

The duke passed the early part of the autumn and latter part of the year 1625 with the king at Hampton Court, his duchess staying at Burleigh-on-the-Hill; where her father, the Earl of Rutland, remained to solace her retirement, for we find him excusing himself from attendance at court on that plea.

XXIII.

BUCKINGHAM AS MINISTER AND ADMINISTRATOR—HIS ENERGETIC EFFORTS AS LORD HIGH ADMIRAL TO CREATE A NAVY—UNJUST DEPRECIATION OF HIS CHARACTER AS REGARDS HIS EXERCISE OF THAT OFFICE—THE COMMENTS OF SAMUEL PEPYS UPON THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR NAVAL FORCE.

THE fortunes and occupations of Buckingham as a courtier and ambassador have hitherto been followed; in which capacities his success depended less on his merits than his good fortune: it is now necessary to consider his conduct as an administrator and the chief responsible adviser of his sovereign during the three last momentous years of this favourite's life.

Shortly after his appointment to the office of Lord High Admiral, one of his first steps was to drag poor King James, aguish, peevish, and prejudiced as he was, to Deptford to see how little there was there to be seen. His next, to get commissioners appointed to superintend the construction of new vessels, and the repair of old ones, the sum allotted to them being cut down from sixty to thirty thousand pounds,

for which consideration they were to build two new ships yearly. Cardinal Richelieu had also endeavoured to remedy the neglect of his predecessors in power and office to support a widely-extended commerce, the only channels of which were on the wide ocean. In his concern for maritime affairs, he set the first example of energy to Buckingham. From this era, therefore, may be traced the rise of our modern naval service in importance, the very vices of both these favourites of fortune having had the effect of virtues under certain circumstances. To their lavish expenditure, to their fearlessness of responsibility, to their boundless ambition, France and England owe the maintenance of their maritime power, and the restoration of their national defences.

The young lord admiral had frankly declared on assuming the direction of the navy, that his inexperience almost disqualified him for that important position to which the partiality of his sovereign had promoted him. Numerous obstacles, of course, occurred at the very outset of his naval undertakings, and one of the great impediments was the ignorance which prevailed in those days of the proper mode of building ships of war. The shipwrights were unaccustomed to construct any vessels but such as were intended to carry merchandise. The Dutch were our great maritime rivals, for France had no naval armament; and although the contemptuous assertion of Voltaire, that Louis XIII. had not, at his accession, a single ship of war, is false, yet he might be said almost to be destitute of naval force, so poor and ill-provided were his vessels, and so incompetent and miserable were his seamen. It became Buckingham's pride to outvie all continental nations in naval power. The design might have originated in his foresight of the probability of the rupture of the treaty with Spain; but it is clear that he cherished it whilst the British nation was at peace with all the world, and that his schemes of improvement were formed previously.

On his accession, Charles renewed his father's warrant granted to twelve commissioners of the navy; and the exigencies of the times, and the probability of a speedy war with Spain, stimulated the exertions of the lord admiral

not in his place, but in his popularity; and no one was yet found hardy enough to beard the lion in his lair.

But Buckingham and Land had not relented, and the king was urged to rid himself of one whom they considered as a communicator with his enemies, and whose counsels tended to lower his sovereignty. At length a searching eye peered into a dormant resolution in council—that the keeper of the Great Seal of England should not continue in that high office longer than a limited period, to be renewed every three years. On this principle, a message was conveyed by Lord Conway, to command the lord keeper to deliver up the Great Seal at “All hallow-tide,” and a desire was intimated that his lordship should retire to his bishoprick. The lord keeper now read his fate. He fell with dignity and on terms. His firmness carried every point throughout the whole of this political transaction. From that moment, with no diminished greatness, Bishop Williams retreated to the princely hospitality of his seat, where he busied himself in his studies and the cultivation of his grounds, and—at that day a novel taste—in forming a gallery of pictures. But his sympathy attracted a closer observation from the freedom of his conversation, and some cursory strictures on the political movements of those inferior minds who had ejected the master-spirit from their councils.

Buckingham certainly lost, at this juncture, an acute and experienced adviser, whose counsels were, perhaps, safer than those of the earnest and fearless, but intemperate and prejudiced Land. It is probable that a party against the royal favourite had been silently forming, and now found a voice in his ill-fortune; but it seems that the overt personal attacks came unexpectedly. Whatever the world thought, Buckingham, in his own mind, felt the change that was prepared for him undeserved. “It could not but trouble him the more,” remarks Sir Henry Wotton, “by happening when he came freshly returned out of a meritorious employment in his inward conceit and hope.” Buckingham found that he was even reproached for not having himself taken the command of the army and navy, and the lord high admiral and

commander-in-chief was accused of sparing his person from an ignoble motive. Sir John Eliot taunted him in the House when he said, "The Lord General has the whole command both by sea and land, and can this great general think it sufficient to put in his deputy, and stay at home?" The intrepidity and daring of Buckingham yielded to no man's, as was afterwards proved. Charles knew that in this respect the character of his favourite was unjustly aspersed, and the king did not wish to see his minister's courage put to the test when the venture was not absolutely required; but it was probably the bitter taunt of Buckingham's unsparing enemy, soon echoed by the public, which induced the duke to take the command in person in his future fatal expeditions.

Charles summoned his second parliament, as he said, "in the midst of necessities," and to learn from them "how he was to frame his course and councils;" reminding them at the same time "that it would be worse for them than for him if any evil should happen to the kingdom." They, however, refused to make an unconditional grant, and were proceeding to the investigation of abuses, when a dispute arose in the Upper House on the question of Parliamentary privilege. During the lifetime of James, the Earl of Bristol, trusting to his favour, had borne the blame of that failure in the Spanish treaty which had so greatly incensed the nation. For some time after the accession of Charles, he waited patiently, hoping to regain his footing at court. But when, upon the meeting of parliament, he received no summons to serve as a peer in his place, he appealed to the Lords. The king then despatched the summons, but accompanied by a letter commanding the earl not to avail himself of it. Bristol forwarded this letter to the Parliament, and requested their advice upon it, offering to appear and bring charges against his enemy, the Duke of Buckingham. The duke, certain that Bristol would impeach him, had, during the vacation, prepared articles of impeachment against the earl, in order to be first in the field, and to anticipate the accusations which he expected would shortly be levelled at himself. The impeachment did, indeed, anticipate distinctly that framed

and his undisguised enmities, had sickened the hearts of the envious, and stung the spirit of the vindictive. One consideration, however, swayed the public favourably, that in the "bolting and sifting of near fourteen years of such power and favour, all that came out could not be expected to be pure and white, and fine metal; but must needs have withal among it a certain mixture of padars and bran in this lower range of human fragility."*

Sir Dudley Digges and Sir John Eliot having explained the meaning of the offensive words, for the use of which they had been committed to the Tower, were released, and the House proceeded to deal with Buckingham's defence. Before any resolution had been come to, the king, under the influence of angry feelings, hastily dissolved the second Parliament, making answer warmly to the request of the Lords for a further delay.—"No, not for one instant!" The result, says Lord Brougham† "inevitably being a new Parliament, afterwards elected, with increased hostility to the royal authority which had put an end to the old."

Of this impeachment, remarks Disraeli, "by the Commons of a minister invested with such a plurality of offices and honours—an individual so potent by situation, and so inconsiderate by disposition, as the Duke of Buckingham, it must be candidly acknowledged, as assuredly it might satisfactorily be shown, that Hume has not exceeded the truth in asserting that "the articles were either frivolous or false, or both. After canvassing the matter for nearly three months, they found themselves utterly incapable of fixing any legal crime upon the duke.

* Sir H. Wotton, p. 225.

† Brougham, "British Constitution," ch. vi. p. 83.

XXV.

WAR WITH FRANCE—THE FAVOURITE'S MOTIVES FOR GOING TO WAR—THE EXPULSION OF THE QUEEN'S ATTENDANTS BROUGHT ABOUT BY BUCKINGHAM—THE DUKE'S JEALOUSY OF HENRIETTA MARIA'S INFLUENCE WITH CHARLES—HIS HARSH TREATMENT OF THE QUEEN—HER PROPOSAL TO RETURN TO PARIS UNDER BUCKINGHAM'S ESCORT—THE DUKE'S RAGE AT BEING OVER-REACHED BY RICHELIEU—RESOLVES TO SUCCOUR THE PROTESTANTS AT LA ROCHELLE.

AMIDST these difficulties and dangers at home, Charles, who had made a peace with Spain immediately after the dissolution of the Parliament, astonished the country by declaring war against France, which had so lately given him a queen. That Buckingham was the author of this imprudent step there can be no doubt.

The war, says Hume, "is commonly ascribed to a personal pique between Buckingham and Richelieu, but it can scarcely be doubted that there were other motives for it." Some writers have traced it to the personal resentments of the duke for an affront he received from the French monarch, in consequence of his ambitious gallantries with "a lady of very sublime quality," as Lord Clarendon, in his courtly delicacy, guardedly describes the eminent female. She was a lady who exercised in "a sovereign degree all the coquetry and intrigue of her nation," says Cardinal de Retz,* furnishing us even with a list of her lovers, in which he has not omitted the name of the English duke.

When the feuds among Queen Henrietta's French attendants appeared likely to produce a rupture with France, Buckingham, eager to seize any opportunity of once more basking in the smiles of Anne of Austria, requested Charles to send him to Paris as a mediator. His real motive, how-

* "Memoirs of Cardinal de Retz," vol. iv.

moderate affairs by some other means. They rejoined shortly afterwards the duke's guests, and the banquet was prolonged till late in the morning; when De Brienne gladly took an opportunity to set off for Dover, and so eager was he to escape from the reproaches of Buckingham, that instead of taking three days, the usual time to reach Dover, he got there by extraordinary exertions in six-and-thirty hours.

Apart, however, from this breach of treaty, and Buckingham's personal antipathy to Richelieu for having exposed and thwarted his impetuous passion for the young queen, a more pressing motive for war presented itself through England's adoption of the cause of foreign Protestantism. There was now no doubt of Richelieu's determination to extirpate the rebellious Huguenots of La Rochelle, for all promises of befriending them had long since proved faithless. The duke, perceiving that he had been compromised by his rival on that score also, at once promised the support of England to the Huguenot capital, and formed an alliance with the dukes of Savoy and Lorraine, who were arming against France.

Whilst thus infuriated at being deceived and thwarted by Richelieu in foreign affairs, Buckingham was incurring odium at home by the popular cry against recusants. The cause of the Protestants in France—who always looked up to England as their nursing mother, or armed champion—had become the cause of the English people, and Buckingham hoped to regain his popularity by espousing it. The Protestants in France then constituted a more formidable body than the Roman Catholics in England, and their general assemblies, which annually met, always occasioned great uneasiness in the French cabinet. If Henry IV., as a great statesman, had complied with the forms of the national religion, he had never forsaken the cause of those to whom he was secretly attached; and the tolerating Edict of Nantes had conferred on his Protestants as large a portion of freedom as could safely be allowed to a hostile minority in the State.

The regency of Marie de' Medici had passed in struggles with the haughty princes of the blood, and a nobility not less potent than factious; insatiate in their claims and restless

with ambition, they appeared at times to aspire to sovereignties. Disdaining the feeble government of a woman, whose views seemed narrowed to her palace, and who had concentrated her passions in her Florentine favourites, these princes and dukes were in a perpetual state of confederacy and rebellion. At length the favourites fell, by a just Nemesis, the hateful victims of the state. Among the powerful malcontents, the Huguenot party had found friends and chieftains, who had often coalesced with the Protestants, without always being Protestants themselves. Four civil wars, and frequent revolts, were as often concluded by a peace with an unvanquished party. The French cabinet, before Richelieu's accession to the fulness of power, was a miserable junto of intriguing ministers, solely intent on dislodging each other. The genius of Richelieu alone could at once subdue an indomitable aristocracy and a whole people of heroes—the Huguenots of France.

But the day of Richelieu's triumph had not yet arrived. The Protestants of France were as formidable as ever.

The leading chiefs of that party were the Duke de Rohan and his brother De Soubise. Of a princely origin, the duke was allied to many crowned heads, but his genius was even more elevated than his rank. Fortunately for Buckingham's endeavours to regain popularity, these noblemen arrived in England during the summer of 1626, after the dissolution of Parliament, and their alliance was eagerly accepted by the duke. Soubise had already assumed the novel style of "Admiral of the Churches," on the coast of Saintonge, Aunis, Poitou, and Brittany. Vast plans of ambition were opened in the bold sketches of these French princes, not ill-adapted to dazzle the eyes of a young monarch and a young minister. The English were to invade France at three different points. They found that a single one proved fatal. Walter Montague, second son of the first Earl of Manchester, was negotiating from Paris with the Dukes of Savoy, Lorraine, and de Rohan. Richelieu suffered the youthful statesman to mature his negotiations till the cardinal contrived to lodge him in the Bastille. Soubise, meanwhile, charmed the imagination of the

from Portsmouth," he added, "proves naught, and the soldier is better satisfied with his beer, if it is good, than with his victuals."*

Unskilled as he necessarily was in the art of war, Buckingham seems, however, to have carried it on, like a paladin, with courtesy and magnificence. When Toiras sent a trumpet to request a passport to convey some wounded officers to the coast, the duke sent them his grand yacht or pinnace, furnished with every elegant convenience, and lined with *tres belle escarlette rouge*, while his musicians, with all the varieties of their instruments, charmed the wounded enemy in crossing the arm of the sea. Toiras next day expressed his grateful sense by sending back five English soldiers who had just been taken.

In a private letter of the times it is mentioned that, "My Lord Duke being offered a thousand pounds for one of the dead bodies (there were thirty marquises, earls, and barons reported to have perished), he nobly refused the money, and offered his own waggons to carry back the bodies, taking especial care of those who are hurt among his prisoners." Buckingham addressed a letter to Toiras, where he said "that every person of merit would always be treated by him with the courtesy which is their due, and he hoped that hitherto he had shown himself no more negligent in this respect than the laws of war allow; but if affairs should compel him to adopt other modes of conduct, he exhorted Toiras to consider his own necessities, which, indeed, he had endured with heroic patience. If his courage still led him to form vain hopes of relief, it might prejudice his safety, which would be avoided by accepting the most honourable conditions."

Toiras was not deficient in the same style—"The courtesies of the Duke of Buckingham are known to all the world, and as they are bestowed with judgment, they can only be truly valued by those who merit them. I know of no greater merit in a man than to devote his life in the service of his king. Many brave men here are of the same

opinion, and they would be ill-satisfied with themselves if they could not overcome any difficulties whatever. I should be unworthy of your favour were I to omit a single point of my duties. It is yourself, sir, who will contribute to my glory, whatever may be the issue."

These letters were afterwards followed by an interchange of civilities. Toiras once inquiring "whether they had saved any melons in the island," was the next day presented, in the duke's name, with a dozen. The bearer received twenty golden crowns, and Toiras, dispatching six bottles of orange-flower water, and a dozen jars of cypress powder, the duke presented the bearer with twenty jacobuses. After a sharp action, when Toiras sent one of his pages, with a trumpet, to request leave to bury some noblemen, the duke received the messenger with terms of condolence.

The duke's valour rivalled his courtesy; and high praise of his gallant conduct reached England in letters written home during the operations against the fort at St. Martin's Point. "The Lord-General," wrote Sir Allen Apsley, "is the most industrious, and in all business one of the first in person in dangers. Last night the enemy's ordnance played upon his lodging, and one shot lighted upon his bed, but did him no harm."* "Unluckily," adds the same writer, "there was no bread and beer thought of for the soldiers—wheat instead of bread, and wine instead of beer." In addition to his anxieties on the score of the requirements of his forces, the duke was badly supported by his officers, none of whom, with the exception of Sir John Burroughs—a brave, blunt soldier—had any capacity. The greatest vigilance was necessary, owing to their carelessness, and, through such fault, Buckingham very narrowly escaped assassination on one occasion. His life was attempted by a fanatical Catholic, who stealthily got within the lines, and whose knife, of a peculiar construction, was found slung in his sleeve. Its singular construction attracted notice, and it was engraved in a published narrative at London; but the Lord-General was not doomed to be struck by this French felon.

* State Papers, vol. lxxi., No. 36.

XXVIII.

THE RETURN TO ENGLAND OF THE DEFEATED DUKE—THE EXPRESSION OF THE KING'S SENTIMENTS TOWARDS HIS UNSUCCESSFUL FAVOURITE—PUBLIC GRIEF AND INDIGNATION AT THE HEAVY LOSS SUSTAINED IN THE RETREAT—AGITATION OF THE NATION—CHARLES'S STRUGGLE WITH HIS PARLIAMENT BEGINS—TRANSPORTS OF THE KING AND BUCKINGHAM AT THE VOTE OF FIVE SUBSIDIES—THE DUKE BECOMES THE OBJECT OF UNIVERSAL HATRED—UNABATED AFFECTION OF CHARLES FOR HIS FAVOURITE.

ALTHOUGH the personal bravery of the duke achieved for him a well-merited laurel, it was one only too dearly purchased. His countrymen, when they witnessed only one-third of his army returning with him to England—when they beheld the wife weeping for her husband, and the orphan for his father—readily forgot that, in that sanguinary retreat, Buckingham had stood alone on the beach until his humblest follower had embarked, and that he was the last man who had quitted the shore.

What were the feelings of Charles I. on this trying occasion—this second baffled expedition? Awaking from the dreams of Monsieur Soubise and St. Blanchard, he saw his unhappy favourite, whom he firmly believed was devoting his life to secure his master's power and his nation's glory, returning with obloquy to encounter fiercer enemies at home than those who had chased him from their shores. With Charles, nothing could shake the strength of his tenderness, and the fulness of his confidence. His agitated spirit could only deeply sympathize with the misfortunes of his friend, and regret that he had not lightened those griefs by a nearer participation of them. The monarch still flatters his discomfited general with honour and reputation, and still leaves to him the brilliant hope of some new design, on the consolation of returning to his sovereign in the entireness of his affections.

All this appears by a letter which Charles had despatched

to Buckingham during his uncertain return, at a moment when the last retreat from Ré had been resolved on, but had not yet occurred. That letter, which the king was not sure would reach its destination, came to Buckingham on his first landing in England. It is an overflowing effusion of friendship from the heart of a monarch. One feels the hurried and the deep emotions in every sentence.

“STEENIE—I pray God that this letter be useless, or never come to your hands, this being only to meet you at your landing in England, in case you should come from Ré, without perfecting your work, happily begun, but, I must confess, with grief, ill seconded. A letter you sent to Jack Epslie (Apsley) is the cause of this, wherein ye have taught me prudence, and how to seek the next best in misfortunes. This is, therefore, to give you power, in case ye should imagine that ye have not enough already, to put in execution any of those designs* ye mentioned to Jack Epslie, or any other that you shall like of, so that I leave it freely to your will, whether after your landing in England ye will set forth again to some design before you come hither; or else that ye will first come to ask my advice before ye undertake a new work, assuring you that, with whatsoever success ye shall come to me, ye shall be ever welcome; one of my greatest griefs being that I have not been with you in this time of suffering, for I know we should have much eased each other’s griefs. I cannot stay longer on this subject for fear of losing myself in it. To conclude, ye cannot come so soon as ye are welcome, and unfeignedly in my mind ye have gained as much reputation with wise and honest men in this action, as if ye had performed all your desires. I have no more to say this time, but to conjure thee, for my sake, to have a care of your health, for every day I have new reasons to confirm me in being your loving, faithful friend,

“CHARLES R.†

“Whitehall, 6th Nov. 1627.”

* One was an attack on Calais; the Duke de Rohan had pointed out several others.

† Harleian MS. 6988 (30).

XXIX.

ANTICIPATIONS OF THE FAVOURITE'S FALL—THE PROPHECIES OF "THE DUKE'S DEVIL" AND LADY DAVIES—BUCKINGHAM'S PREPARATION FOR A SECOND EXPEDITION TO SUCCOUR LA ROCHELLE—THREATS OF ASSASSINATION—THE DUKE RESOLVES TO SUCCEED IN THE ENTERPRISE OR PERISH—HIS IMPRESSIVE FAREWELL TO CHARLES—LAST CONVERSATION WITH LAUD—INCIDENTS DURING THE JOURNEY TO PORTSMOUTH.

A PRESENTIMENT of his approaching fate appears not only to have taken possession of the multitude, but also to have saddened, if it could not terrify, the undaunted Buckingham. The great favourite lived in an age of omens and superstitions. Superstition, however, seems to have exhausted itself in recording an extraordinary number of ominous facts which were thought to prognosticate his death. Lord Clarendon alludes to the many "predictions and prophecies" which forewarned him of his untimely and violent end. Among these, the story of the apparition of his father, Sir George Villiers,—too remarkable to be here wholly unnoticed, and too tedious to be recited—has been told by Clarendon with such seriousness of relation and such circumstantial exactness, that however lightly we may be inclined to think of it, there can be little doubt that his lordship gave it full credit.

The aged sinner, Dr. Lambe, had foretold his own death as well as Buckingham's. This wretched mountebank, who pretended to prophesy by means of supernatural agency, was said to be a creature of the duke. Carte, however, assures us that Buckingham was not even acquainted with Lambe's person. The vulgar nevertheless styled him "the duke's devil." The fact is remarkable, that on the day that Lambe was torn in pieces by the mob, Buckingham's picture fell from its frame in the High Commission chamber at Lambeth—an omen which, when all men were superstitious, and the majority discontented, was eagerly hailed as a certain prog-

nostic of his fall. The most extraordinary prediction was that of the mad prophetess, Lady Eleanor Davies, who certainly foretold the time of the duke's death with remarkable precision.

Of Buckingham's magnanimity in the desperate enterprise to which he devoted himself there can be no question, nor of the motive. Yet in his day his sincerity was strongly suspected, and until he had left his corpse on the mole of La Rochelle, never would his faith or his honour have been credited. He will, however, be found to deserve even a higher eulogy, when it is known how incessantly he resisted the superstitions of the age, in reiterated omens and prodigies and prophecies of his fate. Profuse of his fortunes in the cause which he had adopted, he had resolved by a nobler profusion of life itself, to perish or conquer on that impregnable mole which the great genius of Richelieu had thrown out for above a mile in the ocean. Of this solemn determination there is ample evidence in extant documentary records. He swore to Soubise and the deputies, on departing from Plymouth, that he would die in combat, or enter La Rochelle.* It now appears from numerous State Papers, only lately available to the historic student, that even the fleet, which was then collecting at Plymouth, could never have been despatched, had not Buckingham drained all his last resources. After his death, it appeared that he had furnished unlimited sums to the king, without keeping any accounts whatever, and we are told that his family could never establish their claims.† In the manuscript of his confidential agent, architect and engineer, Gerbier—after describing some tremendous machines, projected for blowing up the dyke, modelled from works which the Prince of Parma

* *Mercure François.*

† With relation to the duke's jewels pawned in the Low Countries, there is a list, signed by Sir Sackville Crowe, together with an order from the king, dated from Woodstock, August 25th, 1629, that those jewels, when redeemed, were to be restored to the Duchess of Buckingham. Another order, dated August 29th, gives a commission to Philip Barlamachi for the sale of 4000 tons of iron ordnance; and with the money derived therefrom he is to redeem divers jewels and plate of his Majesty and the Duke of Buckingham. State Papers, Domestic, vols. 147, 148.

some divines, whose nugatory solutions were no impediment to what in his mind he was covertly driving at—Felton wandered about, watching his opportunity, till he struck the meditated blow.

At his trial, Felton expressed in more than one striking manner his contrition for his crime. When the knife with which he had stabbed Buckingham was produced in court, he is said to have shed tears; and when asked "why sentence of death should not be passed on him?" he lifted up the hand which had done the deed, requesting that it might be first cut off, and that afterwards he might suffer death in the manner the court should think fit. It was proved that the weapon which cut short the life of the princely Buckingham was a common knife, purchased for tenpence at a cutler's shop on Tower-hill, the sheath of which Felton had sewed into the lining of his pocket, so that he could at any moment draw out the knife with one hand—his other being maimed and powerless—and that being extremely poor, the fanatic had travelled to Portsmouth principally on foot.*

There being reason to suspect that he had been instigated by the Puritans, it was proposed to put him to the torture in order to elicit the names of his accomplices. When Lord Dorset told Felton that it was the king's pleasure that he be put to the rack, "My lord," he said, "I do not believe that it is the king's pleasure, for he is a just and gracious prince, and will not have his subjects tortured against law. I do affirm upon my salvation that my purpose was not known to any man living; but if it be his majesty's pleasure, I am ready to suffer whatever his majesty will have inflicted upon me. Yet this I must tell you by the way, that if I be put upon the rack I will accuse you, my lord of Dorset, and none but yourself."† This firm and sensible speech silenced the court. The question whether he could legally be put to the rack was subsequently referred to the judges, who decided that "Felton ought not to be tortured by the rack,

* *Bevy's Western*, p. 232.

† *Harleian MS. 7000*. J. Mordaunt to Sir John Mordaunt, Sept. 27, 1628.

for no such punishment is known or allowed by our law.”*

After his condemnation, he made two requests to the king: one, that he might be allowed to receive the communion before he suffered; and the other, that on the scaffold he might be clothed with sackcloth, with ashes on his head and a halter round his neck, in testimony of his sincere repentance. To the Duchess of Buckingham he sent a message imploring her to pardon him for the death of her husband. She kindly sent him her forgiveness—a boon which he acknowledged with gratitude in his last moments. Felton mentioned a curious fact to those who were about him. He said, that at the instant when he stabbed the duke, he repeated the words, “God have mercy on thy soul!” No wonder it was imagined he had been instigated by the Puritans. Felton was hanged at Tyburn, whence his body was conveyed to Portsmouth, where it remained suspended for a considerable time in chains.

On Charles the tidings of his favourite’s death must have fallen with stunning effect. The court was then at Porchester Castle, a few miles from Portsmouth, whence the king doubtless purposed to witness the departure of his forces, under the command of that friend whom he never ceased to lament. Charles was at prayers with his family and attendants, when Sir John Hippesley suddenly entering the room, without heeding the sacredness of the occasion, went directly up to the king and whispered the news in his ear. Much as Charles loved his favourite, he respected his religious duties more. Whatever may have been the shock to his feelings, he allowed the ceremony to proceed, and even preserved his countenance unmoved. The duke’s fate, however, had transpired through suppressed whispers, and a deep pause ensued—the chaplain considerably thinking to spare his majesty the distress of remaining until the end of the service. But Charles calmly ordered it to proceed, and to its conclusion preserved the same impenetrable demeanour. Such mental effort must have been no slight one. As soon,

* Rushworth, vol. i. p. 638.

people themselves. The enterprise, designed to retrieve the late degraded national honour, was entirely frustrated, and the Protestant cause was fatally injured by the repentant assassin who was imagined to be a Brutus. How many false appearances deceive us in the general page of history!

Buckingham had lofty aspirations, a spirit which was fitted to lead others by its own invincibility—a mind of quick conceptions which an early practice in the world had sharpened, but this practice was unaccompanied by that rare judgment which is only tutored by the severities of time and exercised by patient thought. It was his misfortune to have encountered but few obstacles in his rapid advancements, and his hardy self-will disdained to imagine any. The genius of the man was daring and magnificent, and his elocution was graceful as his manners. But these were natural talents; he possessed no acquired ones. “Had the Duke of Buckingham,” observed Lord Clarendon, “been blessed with a faithful friend, the duke would have committed as few faults and done as transcendent worthy actions as any man in that age in Europe.”

The defects of this favourite's character have been sufficiently shown by his actions. His temerity was flushed by insolence and his ambition panted impatient of emulation. He would have had every man his friend, and every friend, too, sensible that his enmity was terrible. In the sunshine or the lightning of his eye, men were to flourish or to fade. Loaded with that plurality of offices which rendered him odious to the public, on one occasion, as we have shown, he had generously offered to lay them down: but so unfortunate had the expeditions to Cadiz and La Rochelle proved in the hands of others that Buckingham seemed rather urged by necessity than choice to have retained his offices of lord high-admiral and commander-in-chief, with a resolution to carry on his great objects by his own decisive exertions, and even to perish rather than to fail. But to others it seemed also that he would have conferred all the offices of the three kingdoms on his kindred and his friends, dispensing his favours regardless of their value, and, which was more mis-

chievous to himself, of the merits of the claimants—"delighting too much in the press and affluence of dependants and suitors, who are always burrs and sometimes the briars of favourites." Thus has that long-experienced politician, Sir Henry Wotton, observed, on the crowd who waited at the levees of this duke, and had obtained from the people the odious distinction of "Dukelings."

A piece of secret history has come down to us which exhibits the joyous and volatile Buckingham in a phase which we could scarcely have suspected in the life of this favourite. When abroad, his confidential secretary, Dr. Mason, slept in the same chamber with his master. To his amazement he then observed that at night the duke would give way to those suppressed passions which his unaltered countenance had concealed by day. In the absence of all other ears and eyes, Buckingham would break out into the most querulous and impassioned language, declaring that, "Never had dispatches to divers princes, nor the great business of a fleet, of an army, of a siege, of a treaty of war and peace, both on foot together, and all of them in his head at a time, so much broke his repose, as the idea that some at home under his majesty, some of whom he had so well deserved, were now content to forget him." So short-lived is the gratitude observed to an absent favourite.

the two delinquent ladies, banishing them from court, without even permitting them to take farewell of their royal mistress. To increase their confusion, the letters were delivered by the hand of the queen-mother, who did not fail to add to the poignancy of their contents her own peculiarly virulent reprimands.*

The disgrace of the young duchess, however, was only temporary. After her second marriage she appeared again at court with increased rank and splendour, and was soon appointed, to the great satisfaction of the queen, her chief lady-in-waiting. The sprightly humour, keen intelligence, and vigorous self-will of Marie had become a necessity to the isolated existence of Anne of Austria. They passed the whole of their time in each other's society—seeking to turn each incident throughout the day “into matter for mirth and gaiety: *a giorine cuor tutto è giuoco.*” Lord Rich, afterwards the celebrated Earl of Holland, had visited the French court at the close of 1624, to demand for the Prince of Wales, who shortly afterwards became Charles I., the hand of the lovely Henrietta Maria, sister of Louis XIII. During this negotiation, the Earl of Holland was smitten with the charms of Madame de Chevreuse. Young, clever, and exceedingly handsome, he succeeded in pleasing the duchess, and won her over to the interests of England. This seems to have been Marie's first initiation into that mixed game of love and politics to which she devoted henceforward her whole existence. Holland, who was himself volatile, and a man of pleasure and intrigue, persuaded her to engage her

* Mad. de Motteville, p. 12. “Elle dît même que la reine étant devenue grosse se blêma en ouvrant après la Comtesselle.”—Bassompierre, “Mém.” “La reine devint grosse, et l'étoit de six semaines, quand un soir . . . s'en retournant coucher et passant par la grande salle du Louvre, Mad. la Comtesselle de Luynes et Madlle. de Verneuil la tenant sur le bras et le bras couru, elle broncha et tomba, dont elle se blêma et perdit son fruit . . . On fit sauter du rail couru et en quelle figure la reine s'étoit blêmée, et on l'aimoit tellement contre les deux dames qu'il manda à la reine qu'il ne vouloit plus que Madlle. de Verneuil et Mad. la Comtesselle fussent auprès d'elle, et leur dit qu'il leur envoie une lettre pour leur faire savoir qu'elle envoie à sa retraite du Louvre.” Le mariage de la Comtesselle avec le Duc de Chevreuse, qui avoit beaucoup de crédit auprès du roi, arrangea tout, et la rendit en grâce. “Mémoires de Louisa de Maréchal.” Collect. Petitot, 1^{re} série, t. vii. p. 326.

royal friend and mistress in some "belle passion" like their own. . Anne of Austria was vain and coquettish; she loved to please and excite admiration, and with the love of her country for "*la belle galanterie*," and in the forlornness in which Louis left her, she did not interdict herself from receiving that degree of homage which she considered due alike to her personal charms and her high station; but here she entered upon a path full of dangers, and the handsome, the magnificent Buckingham crossed it to trouble, to a sufficiently serious extent, the heart of the then giddy young queen. It was not perhaps the fault of Madame de Chevreuse that Anne of Austria did not fall altogether a victim to the audacious duke. Buckingham, as we have seen, was daringly enterprising, the fair *surintendante* very complaisant, and the queen only saved herself by a hair's-breadth.

Whatever Retz may say, it is very doubtful whether Buckingham had any other relation with Madame de Chevreuse than that of the intimate friend of her lover, the chief of the party into which Holland had inveigled her. It would be difficult to assign the period wherein to place the alleged amours of Buckingham and Madame de Chevreuse. She saw him for the first time when he went to France in the month of May, 1625, to conduct the Princess Henrietta Maria to England, and then Buckingham was at the height of his mad passion for Queen Anne, Madame de Chevreuse being deeply in love with the Earl of Holland, with whom she was about to travel into England, having had the tact to get herself and her husband included in the escort which accompanied the young Queen of England to her new abode at Whitehall. Again, when Madame de Chevreuse really did love anyone, Retz himself tells us she loved that one faithfully and solely. It is rarely the case that at twenty-four, a woman trifles with a first attachment to the extent of being willing to give her lover to another; and the part which the poor duchess played throughout that affair was not altogether so transparent as to need it being rendered yet more turbid. Madame de Chevreuse, it is true, became ill on learning the news of Buckingham's assassination. Nothing was more

therein; and the intrigue in which the one and the other engaged was so rash, that in this instance it must be admitted that it was not Châteauneuf who inveigled Madame de Chevreuse, but that it was she who therein entangled the keeper of the seals.

Châteauneuf had then reached the mature age of fifty, and the sentiment which he had conceived for Madame de Chevreuse was destined to prove one of those absorbing passions which precede and which generally mark the final departure of youth. As for Madame de Chevreuse, she shared to their full extent the dangers and misfortunes of Châteauneuf, and later on she would never consent to separate her success from his. She preserved at least in all her deviations from rectitude this remnant of probity—that when she loved any one she loved that one with a boundless fidelity, and love once having departed, inviolable friendship invariably succeeded.

Already, for some time back, Richelieu had perceived that his keeper of the seals was no longer the same man. His distrustful spirit, seconded by wonderful penetration and an incomparable police, had put him on the traces of Châteauneuf's most secret manœuvres; and he seems to have taken delight in collecting together every indication of his former friend's treason, if we may judge from the evidence of certain hitherto inedited manuscripts, which read more like a stray chapter of his memoirs* than anything else. It is said that during an illness, which the cardinal thought would prove fatal, Anne of Austria gave a ball, at which Châteauneuf was not only present, but was seen to join in the dance, a signal act of folly that enlightened as well as irritated Richelieu. On the 25th of February, 1633, the keeper of the seals was arrested, and all his papers seized. Among them were found fifty-two letters in the handwriting of Madame de Chevreuse, by which, under an easily con-

* M. Cousin states that he discovered this curious fragment in the archives of the "Affaires Étrangères," France, &c., the last document in the volume, under the title of "Mémoire de M. le Cardinal de Richelieu contre M. de Châteauneuf." Twelve pages in the well-known hand of Charpentier, one of the secretaries of the cardinal.

strued cipher and a very transparent jargon, the sentiments and relations existing between Châteauneuf and the duchess were revealed. There were many letters likewise of the Chevalier de Jars, of the Earl of Holland, Montagu, Puy-laurens, De Brion, the Duke de Vendome, and the Queen of England herself. These papers were carried to the cardinal, who turned the key upon them. After his death they were found in his strong box, and thus fell into the possession of the Marshal Richelieu, who lent them to Père Griffet for his "History of the Reign of Louis XIII."

M. Cousin speaks of a copy, long since made, of those documents at present in the possession of the Duke de Luynes, "who is," adds that judicious writer, "of a mind too elevated to dream of concealing from history the errors, already too well known, of his illustrious ancestors, more especially when those errors bear the indications of a noble heart and a lofty character." From these manuscripts, and particularly by the letters of Madame de Chevreuse, it is seen that Richelieu was studiously anxious to gain her over, that he paid her every attention, that he was jealous* of Châteauneuf, and that the latter was becoming alarmed at the caution which she practised towards the first minister in order the better to conceal their intercourse and their plots. Various passages of these still inedited letters possess a strong interest, revealing as they do at once the subtle and audacious spirit of the duchess; her empire over the keeper of the seals, and the unswerving hatred which she bore to the cardinal amid all the deference and prodigal attentions she received at his hands. Two extracts will probably suffice to convey some idea of the nature of this secret correspondence. Both letters were addressed to Châteauneuf:—

"Je vous commanderai toujours, hors cette fois que je vous demande une grace qui est la plus grande que vous

* Richelieu's jealousy of Châteauneuf appears in the following passage from the "Mémoires" of La Porte, p. 322:—"Ce cardinal m'interrogea fort sur ce que faisoit la reine, si M. de Châteauneuf alloit souvent chez elle, s'il y étoit tard, et s'il n'alloit pas ordinairement chez Mad. de Chevreuse."

to the knowledge she had acquired of old touching the cardinal's implacable resentment. She suspended or prolonged her preparations for departure, and, as loyal as she was prudent, she showed Boispille what she had just received, authorizing him to communicate it to Richelieu.

Another month had scarcely elapsed, when she received a letter of similar nature, though not anonymous, but bearing the signature of that man who was perhaps the most devoted to her of any other in the world:—

"I am certain of the design which his eminence the Cardinal de Richelieu has formed of offering you everything imaginable to induce you to return to France, and thereupon cause you to perish miserably. The Marquis de Ville, who has spoken to him and M. de Chavigny, can further enlighten you on the subject, having heard it with his own ears. I expect him every hour, and if I thought that I had sufficient influence over your mind to divert you from taking this resolution, I would proceed to throw myself at your feet, and acquaint you with the certain and absolute destruction meditated, and conjure you, by all that you hold most dear in this world, to avoid this woe, too cruel for any among your friends to bear, but to me more insupportable than to any other living man; protesting to you that if my own destruction could obtain you repose, I should esteem the occasion most happy which allowed me to embrace it, and that nothing save consideration for you alone prompts me to this service; being for ever, madame, your very affectionate servant,

CHARLES DE LORRAINE.

"Cirk, the 26th May, 1639."

This fresh warning, coming from so reliable a source, increased Madame de Chevreuse's anxiety in the highest degree. She forwarded that second letter to Richelieu, as she had done the first, to show him that she was not kept back by trifling motives, and to let him judge of her present harassing state of incertitude. She declared, likewise, that

she would not quit England before she had seen the Marquis de Ville, whose visit to her had been announced by the Duke de Lorraine.

Henri de Livron, Marquis de Ville, was a brave and high-spirited gentleman of Lorraine, attached to his prince and country, who, flung into the Bastille by Richelieu, had, on obtaining his release, hastened to join the Duke Charles in the Low Countries. He arrived in London early in the month of August, 1639, and made every effort to persuade Madame de Chevreuse to break with the cardinal. The duchess desired him to repeat his explanations in the presence of Boisville, in order that the latter might give Richelieu an account of their conference. The Marquis de Ville remained unshaken in his opinion, and he readily offered to commit the following statement to paper and sign it formally as his deposition:—"A person named Lange, having accompanied me last winter from Paris as far as Charenton, told me that he well knew the strong desire I had to serve Madame de Chevreuse; the which urged him to address himself to me in order to assure me that she would be lost should she venture to return to France at the present moment. Pressing him to tell me what he knew more particularly on that subject, he—after obtaining from me a promise that I would reveal it only to his Highness of Lorraine or to Madame de Chevreuse—told me that only two days previously, M. the Cardinal, speaking to M. de Chavigny of Madame de Chevreuse, expressed himself as being very much dissatisfied with her for persisting in her denial of having counselled the Duke de Lorraine not to come to an understanding with France. Whereupon M. de Chavigny seemed also to be much astonished, both adding that the thing was quite clear, and that when Madame de Chevreuse returned to France, they would make her 'speak in plain French' when they showed her the letters that were in their possession, of which she had no idea, and that if she thought to deceive them she only deceived herself; asserting that he knew all this from having heard it with his own ears. Signed, Henri de Livron, Marquis de Ville, at London, this 8th of August, 1639."

closely allied with Gaston and the Grand-Ecuyer, and that she herself had invited his concurrence. "The queen, whom the cardinal had persecuted in such a variety of ways, did not doubt that, if the king should chance to die, that minister would seek to deprive her of her children in order to assume the regency himself. She secretly instigated De Thou to seek the Duke de Bouillon with persevering entreaties. She asked the latter whether, in the event of the king's death, he would promise to receive her and her two children in his stronghold at Sedan: believing, so firmly was she persuaded of the evil designs of the cardinal and of his power, that there was no other place of safety for them throughout the realm of France. De Thou further told the Duke de Bouillon that since the king's illness the queen and the Duke d'Orleans were very closely allied, and that it was through Cinq-Mars that their alliance had been brought about. Now, where the queen was so deeply implicated, it was not likely that Madame de Chevreuse would stand aloof. The duchess, moreover, had long co-operated with De Thou, who had compromised himself on her account in an affair the nature of which it is now impossible to determine, but touching which this much is certain, that he had great difficulty in obtaining pardon from the cardinal, as he himself acknowledged during the tragical trial which brought him to the scaffold. A friend of Richelieu, whose name has not come down to us, but who must have been perfectly well informed, does not hesitate to place Madame de Chevreuse, as well as the queen, among those who then endeavoured to overthrow Richelieu. "M le Grand," he writes to the cardinal,* "has been impelled to his wicked design by the queen-mother, by her daughter, by the Queen of France, by Madame de Chevreuse, by Montagu, and other English papists." At length the cardinal himself, on an early day in June, 1612, retired to Tarascon for the sake of his health, but no doubt, for safety also; accompanied by his two bosom friends, Mazarin and Chavigny, and the faithful regiments of his guards. Feeling himself surrounded with perils, and representing to Louis

* "Archives des Affaires Etrangères," F. 1562, t. m. cl. Letter of 15th July.

XIII. the gravity of the situation, he cited that which had been alleged of Madame de Chevreuse as amongst the most striking indications of the truth of what he stated.* What *was* the party in fact then conspiring against Richelieu? Was it not the party of bygone combinations—of the League, of Austria, and of Spain? And Madame de Chevreuse at Brussels, through her connexion with the Duke de Lorraine, the Queen of England, the Chevalier de Jars at Rome, the Count-Duke Olivarez at Madrid—was she not one of the main motive powers of that party? When, therefore, it was found to be in activity, it was quite natural to suspect the hand of Madame de Chevreuse in all its movements.

But ere long Richelieu's eagle glance pierced through the darkness which enveloped him; he saw clearly the aim of the Grand-Ecuyer's intrigue, for which he had long been watching. A treachery, the secret of which has remained impenetrable to every research made during the last two centuries, allowed the treaty concluded with Spain to fall into his hands, through the medium of Fontrailles, under the signatures of Gaston, Cinq-Mars, and the Duke de Bouillon. From that moment the cardinal felt himself certain of the victory. He thoroughly knew Louis XIII.; he knew that he might, in some paroxysm of his changeful and morbid humour, have complained of his minister to his favourite—even expressed a wish to be rid of him, and listened to strange proposals for effecting such object;† but he knew also to what extent he was a king and a Frenchman, and devoted to their common system. He hastened, therefore, to despatch Chavigny from Narbonne with the authentic proofs of the treaty with Spain. Louis was thunderstruck; he could scarcely believe his own eyes. He sank into a fit of gloomy melancholy, and out of which he emerged only to give way to bursts of indignation against him who could thus abuse his confidence, and conspire with the foreigner. There was no need to inflame his anger; he was the first to call for an

* "Archives des Affaires Etrangères," FRANCE, tom. cii. Inedited Memoir of Richelieu.

† See the "Memoirs of Montglat," Petitot Coll. "

self sustained by all her many claims to illustrious connexions, power, and renown. She believed herself sure of the Duke d'Orleans; who, she thought, ought easily to govern his wife, the beautiful Margaret, sister of Charles of Lorraine. She could dispose almost at will of the house of Rohan, as well as of the house of Lorraine, particularly of the Duke de Guise and the Duke d'Elbeuf—like herself, just returned from Flanders. She reckoned upon the Vendômes, upon the Duke d'Epernon, upon La Vieuville, her old companions in exile in England; upon the ill-treated Bouillons; upon La Rochefoucauld, whose disposition and pretensions were so well known to her; upon Lord Montagu, who had been her slave, and at that moment possessed the entire confidence of Anne of Austria; upon La Châtre, the friend of the Vendômes, and colonel-general of the Swiss Guards; upon Tréville, upon Beringhen, upon Jars, upon La Porte, who were all emerging from exile, prison, and disgrace. Among the women, her young stepmother and her sister-in-law seemed secure—Madame de Montbazou* and Madame de Guyméné, the two greatest beauties of the day, who drew after them a numerous train of old and young adorers. She knew also that one of the regent's first acts had been to recall to her side two noble victims of Richelieu—Madame de Senecé and Madame d'Hautefort—whose piety and virtue had conspired usefully with other influences, and had given them an inestimable weight in the household of Anne of Austria. All these calculations seemed certain, all those hopes well-founded; and Madame de Chevreuse quitted Brussels in the firm persuasion that she was going to re-enter the Louvre as a conqueress. She deceived herself; the queen was already changed, or very nearly being so.

If the time has arrived for apportioning to Louis XIII. his proper place in history, it is only just to do the same for Anne of Austria. She was not an ordinary person.

* It was to this lady that the future marshal of that name—a man of war and pleasure, but wavering politics, who, during the *Fronde*, vacillated between Mazarin and Condé—wrote on the taking of Perouse, "Per une est à la belle des belles."

Beautiful, conscious of her charms, and feeling the want of being beloved, but at the same time vain and proud, she had been deeply wounded by her husband's coldness and neglect; and partly through revenge, partly through coquetry, she had taken delight in kindling more than one passion, though without ever overstepping the bounds of *l'honnête galanterie*—as the fair Spanish princess was wont to phrase it—in the sprightliness and gaiety of her early womanhood. She had endured impatiently the slights and disparagement to which she was so long subjected, when, deprived of all influence, she had been held in something nearly resembling permanent disgrace by the king and Richelieu; hence her covert but persistent opposition to the cardinal's government. She had not hesitated to engage in divers enterprises, which, as we have seen, met with such ill success as contributed to involve her in no inconsiderable amount of danger. She then summoned to her aid one other of her qualities as a woman and a Spaniard—dissimulation. Misfortune had speedily taught her “that ugly but necessary virtue,” to use Madame de Motteville's* words; and it is not difficult to perceive that she had made rapid progress in it. Naturally idle, she had a distaste for business; but she was intelligent, even courageous, and capable of understanding and obeying reason. Up to the present moment she had played a double game—to make partisans in secret, to encourage and urge onwards the discontented, to endeavour to elude the cardinal's yoke, and meanwhile to feign a fair exterior towards him, lull him asleep by false show, humiliate herself when needful, gain time and wait patiently. After Richelieu's death, feeling herself stronger both in her two children and through the incurable malady of Louis XIII., she had but one object, to which she had sacrificed everything—to be a regent—and she attained it, thanks to a rare patience, infinite precaution, to a skilful and sustained line of conduct; thanks also to the unhopèd-for service that Mazarin rendered her on becoming the dying king's prime minister. Anne had neglected nothing that could tend to disarm the resentment

* Tome i. p. 186.

firm, decisive, he loved the State, and he was more capable than anyone else of re-establishing the old form of government which Richelieu had begun to destroy. He was very firmly attached to Madame de Chevreuse, and she knew sufficiently well the way to govern him. She, therefore, urged his return with much warmth." Already had Châteauneuf obtained as a boon that the rigid incarceration under which he had groaned for ten years should be changed into a sort of retirement to one of his country houses. Madame de Chevreuse demanded the termination of this mitigated exile, and that she might once more behold him who had endured such extremities for the queen's sake and her own. Mazarin saw that he must yield, but only did so slowly, never appearing himself to repulse Châteauneuf, but always setting forth the necessity of humouring the Condé family, and especially the princess, who, as already said, hated him as the judge of Henri de Montmorenci. Châteauneuf was, therefore, recalled, but with that reservation accorded to the last clause of the king's will, that he should not appear at court, but reside at his own house of Montrouge, near Paris, where his friends might visit him.

The next step was to transfer him thence to some ministerial office. Châteauneuf was no longer a young man, but neither his energy nor his ambition had deserted him, and Madame de Chevreuse made it a point of honour to replace him in the post of Lord Keeper, which he had formerly held and lost through her, and which all Queen Anne's old friends saw with indignation held by one of the most detested of Richelieu's creatures, Pierre Séguier. The duchess perceiving that she would have to contend at first with a strong and perhaps insurmountable opposition, took another way to reach the same end: she contented herself with asking for the lowest seat in the cabinet for her friend, well knowing that once installed therein, Châteauneuf would soon manage all the rest and aggrandize his position. At the same time that she laboured to extricate from disgrace the man upon whom rested all her political hopes, Madame de Chevreuse, not daring to attack Mazarin overtly, insensibly undermined

the ground beneath his feet and prepared his ruin. Her experienced eye enabled her quickly to perceive the most favourable point of attack whence to assail the queen, and the watchword she passed was to fan and keep alive to the utmost the general feeling of reprobation which all the proscribed, on returning to France, aroused and spread abroad against the memory of Richelieu. This feeling was universal among the great families he had decimated or despoiled; in the Church—too firmly repressed not to be unmindful of its abasement; in the parliament—confined to its judicial functions, and aspiring to break through such limits. It was still alive in the queen's bosom, who could not have forgotten the deep humiliation to which Richelieu had subjected her, and the fate for which he had probably reserved her. These tactics succeeded, and on every quarter there arose, from the violence, the tyranny, and, by a rebound against the creatures of Richelieu, a storm so furious that Mazarin's utmost ability was taxed to allay it.

Madame de Chevreuse, therefore, supplicated the queen to repair the long-endured misfortunes of the Vendôme princes by bestowing upon them either the admiralty, to which an immense power was attached, or the government of Brittany, which the head of the family, Cæsar de Vendôme, had formerly held, deriving it alike from the hand of his father, Henry IV., and from the heritage of his father-in-law, the Duke de Mercœur. This was nothing less than demanding the aggrandizement of an unfriendly house, and at the same time the ruin of two families that had served Richelieu with the utmost devotion, and were best capable of supporting Mazarin. That minister parried the blow aimed at him by the duchess by dint of address and patience; never refusing, always eluding, and summoning to his aid his grand ally, as he termed it—Time. Before Madame de Chevreuse's return, he had found himself compelled to gain over the Vendômes and to secure them in his interest. On the death of Richelieu, he had strenuously contributed to their recall, and had since made them every kind of advance; but he soon perceived that he could not satisfy them without bringing about his own destruction.

(Châteauneuf) my place, by saying that she has still need of me for some short time." "I am told that Madame de Chevreuse directs secretly Madame de Vendôme (a pious person who has great influence over the bishops and convents), and gives her instructions, in order that she may not fall into error, and that all the machinery employed against me may thoroughly answer its purpose." This last entry proves that Madame de Chevreuse, without being in the smallest degree possible a *dévot*, knew right well how to make use of the *parti dévot*; which exercised great influence over Anne of Austria's mind and gave serious uneasiness to Mazarin.

Though beaten upon several points, Madame de Chevreuse did not consider herself vanquished. She encouraged and rallied her adherents by her high spirit and firm resolve. The party strife went on—intrigues were multiplied—but up to the end of August, 1643 no change had taken place, though the acrimony of party feeling had become largely increased. Finding that she had fruitlessly employed insinuation, flattery, artifice, and every species of court intrigue, that daring spirit did not shrink from the idea of having recourse to other means of success. The former mistress of Chalais found small difficulty in acquiring sole sway over a faction composed of second-rate talents. She caressed it skilfully; and, with the art of an experienced conspirator, she fomented every germ of false honour, of quintessential devotedness, and extravagant rashness. Mazarin, who, like Richelieu, had an admirable police, forewarned of Madame de Chevreuse's manœuvres, fully comprehended the danger by which he was threatened. No man could have been better informed as to his exact position than the cardinal; and the plan of the duchess and the chiefs of the *Importants* developed itself clearly under Mazarin's sharp-sightedness—either by their incessant and elaborately-concerted intrigues with the queen, to make her abandon a minister to whose policy she had not thoroughly declared her adhesion, or to treat that minister as Luynes had done the Marshal d'Ancre, and as Mentréor, Barrière, and Saint-Ybar, would have served Richelieu. The

first part of the plan not succeeding, they began to think seriously about the second, and Madame de Chevreuse, the strongest mind of the party, proposed with some show of reason to act before the return of the young hero of Rocroy, the Duke d'Enghien; for that conqueror once in Paris would unquestionably shield Mazarin. It was necessary, therefore, to profit by his absence in order to strike a decisive blow. Success seemed certain, and even easy. They were sure of having the people with them, who, exhausted by a long war and groaning under a weight of taxation, would naturally welcome with delight the hope of peace and quiet. They might reckon on the declared support of the parliament, burning to recover that importance in the state of which Richelieu had deprived them, and which was then a matter of dispute with Mazarin. They had all the secret and even public sympathy of the episcopate, which, with Rome, detested the Protestant alliance, and demanded the restoration of that of Spain. The eager concurrence of the aristocracy could not be doubted for a moment; which ever regretted its old and turbulent independence, and whose most illustrious representatives, the Vendômes, the Guises, the Bouillons, and the La Rochefoucaulds were openly opposed to the domination of a foreign favourite, without fortune, without family, and as yet without fame. The princes of the blood resigned themselves to Mazarin rather than to liking him. The Duke d'Orleans was not remarkable for great fidelity to his friends, and the politic Prince de Condé looked twice ere he quarrelled with the successful. He coaxed all parties, whilst he clung to his own interests. His son would follow in his father's footsteps, and he would be won over by being loaded with honours. The day following that on which the blow should be struck there would be no resistance to their ascendancy, and on the very day itself scarcely any obstacle. The Italian regiments of Mazarin were with the army; there were scarcely any other troops in Paris, save the regiments of guards, the colonels of which were nearly all devoted to the *Importants*. The queen herself had not yet renounced her former friendships. Her

been a nullity, it is true, in the fierce struggle which had just inaugurated the new reign so dazzlingly; but a power of no slight weight was manifest in the success which had followed his advent to office, and which proved to astonished Europe that the victory of Rocroy was not a lucky stroke of chance. When every member of the council was opposed to the siege of Thionville, and when Turenne himself, on being consulted, did not venture to declare his opinion on the subject, it was Mazarin who had insisted with an unflinching persistence that the victory of Rocroy should be profited by, and that France should extend her frontier to the bank of the Rhine. That proposition, doubtless, first emanated from the young conqueror, but Mazarin had the merit of comprehending, sustaining, and causing it to triumph. If no first minister had ever before been so served by such a general, neither had general ever been so supported by such a minister; and, thanks to both, on the 11th of August, whilst the chivalrous *Important* exhausted their combined talents in putting a shameful affront upon the noble sister of the hero who had just served France so gloriously, and who was about further to aggrandise it—whilst they were displaying their vapid and noisy eloquence in the *salons*, or sharpening their poniards in gloomy council-chambers, Thionville, then one of the chief strongholds of the empire, surrendered after an obstinate defence. Thus, the regency of Anne of Austria opened under the most brilliant auspices. And, at the same time, the minister to whom the queen owed so much, instead of dictating to and presuming to govern her, was ever at her feet, and prodigal of that attention, respect, and tenderness to which she had been hitherto a stranger. Far from appearing to resemble the melancholy and imperious Richelieu, Anne, perhaps, might have recalled with agreeable emotion the words of her deceased consort, Louis XIII., when he presented Mazarin to her for the first time (in 1639 or 1640):—"He will please you, madame, because he bears a striking resemblance to Buckingham." But it was Buckingham with quite a different kind of genius. She must indeed have shuddered when Mazarin placed before her all the proofs of

the odious conspiracy formed against him. The most minute and confidential explanations ensued thereupon between them. It was now more than ever necessary for her to lift the mask,* to sacrifice to a manifest necessity the circumspection she was studious of preserving—to brave somewhat further the prattle of a few devotees of either sex ; and, at all events, to allow her prime minister to defend his life. Up to this moment, Anne of Austria hesitated, for reasons which may be readily comprehended. Madame de Montbazon's insolence had already greatly irritated her, the conviction she acquired that numerous attempts at assassination had only by chance failed, and might be renewed, decided her ; and it was, therefore, towards the close of August, 1643 when the date of that declared ascendancy, open and unrivalled, must be certainly fixed, of Mazarin over Anne of Austria. The cardinal had never been displeasing to her, and he had begun to ingratiate himself during the month preceding the death of Louis XIII. ; she named him prime minister about the middle of May—a little through individual liking, but more through political necessity. By degrees, the liking increased, and grew sufficiently strong to resist every assault. These conspirators, by proceeding to the last extremities, thereby making her tremble for Mazarin's life, hastened the victory of the happy cardinal ; and on the morrow of the last nocturnal ambush in which he was marked for destruction, Mazarin became absolute master of the queen's heart, and more powerful than Richelieu had even been after the *Day of Dupes*.

About the time of this serious conjuncture, Mazarin was attacked with a slight illness, brought on by heavy labours and wearing anxieties, and an attack of jaundice having supervened, the cardinal jotted the following short but highly suggestive memorandum :—“ *La giallezza cagionata da soverchio amore.*”

Madame de Motteville was in attendance on the queen when tidings of the abortive attempt at assassination brought a crowd of courtiers to the Louvre in hot haste to protest

* “ Quitarse la maschera,” *Carnet*, ii. p. 65.

of Saint-Malo, she solicited an asylum at the hands of the Marquis de Coetquen. That noble and generous Breton gave her the hospitality which was due to a woman in misfortune. She did not abuse it, and after placing her jewels in his hands, as she had formerly done in those of La Rochefoucauld,* she embarked with her daughter, in the depth of winter, at Saint-Malo, on board a small vessel bound for Dartmouth, whence she purposed crossing over to Dunkirk and entering Flanders. But the English parliamentary men-of-war were cruising off those shores. They met with, and took prisoner the wretched little bark, and carried her into the Isle of Wight. There Madame de Chevreuse was recognised; and as they knew her to be a friend of the Queen of England, the Roundheads were not loth to subject her to sufficiently rough treatment, and afterwards hand her over to Mazarin. Fortunately, in the Governor of the Isle of Wight she met with the Earl of Pembroke, whom she had formerly known. The duchess appealed to his courtesy;† and, thanks to his good offices, she obtained, with no little difficulty, passports which permitted her to gain Dunkirk, and thence the Spanish Low Countries.

She took up her abode for a short time at Liege, and applied herself to maintain and consolidate to the utmost degree possible between the Duke de Lorraine, Austria, and Spain, an alliance which was the final resource of the *Importants*, and the last basis of her own reputation and high standing. Mazarin, however, having got the upper hand, resumed all Richelieu's designs, and, like him, made strenuous efforts to detach Lorraine from his two allies. The duke was then madly enamoured of the fair Beatrice de Cusance, Princess of Cantecroix. Mazarin laboured to gain over the lady, and he proposed to the ambitious and

* Subsequently, she requested the Marquis of Coetquen to hand over her jewels to Mentrésor, who transferred them to a messenger of the duke. But Mazarin was informed of everything from first to last; he was aware of every tittle of the duchess's correspondence; he tried to seize with the strong hand the famous pearls; arrested Mentrésor and kept him for upwards of a year in prison. See *Memoirs of Mentrésor*.

† See her letter to the Earl of Pembroke, dated Isle of Wight, 25th April, 1645, in "*Archives des Affaires Étrangères*," Paris, t. vii. p. 162.

enterprising Charles IV. to break with Spain and march into Franche-Comté with the aid of France, promising to leave him in possession of all he might conquer. He succeeded in gaining over to his interest Duke Charles's own sister, the former mistress of Puylaurens, the Princess de Phalzburg, then greatly fallen from her former "high estate;" and who gave him secret and faithful account of all that passed in the immediate circle of her brother. Mazarin required of her especially to keep him apprised of Madame de Chevreuse's slightest movement. He knew that she was in correspondence with the Duke de Bouillon, that she disposed of the Imperial general Piccolomini by means of her friend Madame de Strozzi, and even that she had preserved intact her sway over the Duke de Lorraine, despite the charms of the fair Beatrice. By the help of the Princess de Phalzburg he watched every step, and disputed with her, foot to foot, possession of the fickle Charles IV., sometimes victor, but very often the vanquished in this mysterious struggle.

The advantage remained with Madame de Chevreuse. Her ascendancy over Charles IV.—the offspring of love, but surviving that passion, and more potent than all the later loves of that inconstant prince—retained him in the service of Spain, and frustrated Mazarin's projects. By degrees she became once more the soul of every intrigue planned against the French Government. She did not always attack it from without, but excited interiorly difficulties, which, like the heads of the hydra, were unceasingly springing forth. Surrounded by a knot of ardent and obstinate emigrants, among others by the Count de Saint-Ybar, one of the most resolute men of the party, she kept up the spirits of the remnant of the *Importants* left in France, and everywhere added fuel to the fire of sedition. Actuated by strong passion, yet mistress of herself, she preserved a calm brow amidst the wrack of the tempest, at the same time that she displayed an indefatigable activity in surprising the weak side of the enemy. Making use alike of the Protestant and the Catholic party, sometimes she meditated a revolt in Languedoc, or a descent upon Brittany; at others, on the slightest symptom of discontent

view to forgetfulness of the past. The cavaliers who before the tragi-comedy of the Fronde had charged with the Prince de Condé at Rocroy, fought together like desperadoes, with oblivion of themselves. The Count Bussy-Rabutin, La Roche-foucauld, and the Sevigné's, though *Frondeurs* to the backbone, rather belonged to that mixed party which had wished to keep in with both the king and the Fronde—a party as discontented with the absolute authority to which the young Louis XIV. aspired, as with the public promoters of turbulence. From Madame de Sevigné's letters we may learn what regret was felt for the coadjutor, Cardinal de Retz, the Duke de Beaufort, and the rest of the party of wearied and desperate men who sought to restrain and guide the sceptre-hand of the boy-king. Absolute power was, therefore, the offspring of universal lassitude.

II.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE AS DESCRIBED BY HER CONTEMPORARIES—FIRST SEEN BY LOUIS XIV. AT THE PALACE OF ST. CLOUD—DEEP AND LASTING IMPRESSION MADE UPON HER HEART BY THE YOUNG KING.

LOUISE FrançoisE de la Baume Le Blanc de la Vallière was born in 1644, in the centre of the garden of France, near the gates of Tours, of a noble stem, originally from the Bourbonnais and established in Touraine. Having lost her father in childhood, she had been brought up in the old château of Blois, the residence of the king's uncle, Gaston. The mother of Louise had remarried with the duke's chief *maître d'hôtel*, Jacques de Courtravel, Marquis de Saint-Rémy. At fifteen, when the English princess Henrietta formed her court, on her marriage with Philip d'Orléans the king's brother, Mademoiselle de la Vallière was enrolled amongst the duchess's maids-of-honour. She was then a

childish-looking girl, with only slightly regular features, but those features bore an expression of ineffable sweetness. An air of languor, probably arising from physical delicacy, gave a somewhat peculiar charm to her slender figure, though she was slightly lame with one foot. It was upon her the well-known bitter line was penned—

“Soyez boiteuse, ayez quinze ans.”

Added to this, all her companions praised her graceful, witty, animated, and at the same time amiable conversation; full, also, as it was of those pungent sallies which frequently constitute the best feature of high-bred social intercourse.

Somewhat later, the loveliness of Mademoiselle de la Vallière became of a nature and quality so exquisite and tender that all contemporary writers are unanimous on the subject. The engravings or even painted portraits of her will hardly now convey a just idea of that species of beauty which was entirely her own.* Freshness and delicate brilliancy of complexion, a vivacious yet soft and subdued manner, constituted an essential part of her fascination. “She was very amiable,” writes Madame de Motteville, “and her beauty had great fascination through the dazzling pink and white of her complexion, through the gentle glance of her blue eyes, and by the radiance of her glossy hair, which strikingly enhanced the lustre of her expressive countenance. Her soft gaze was accompanied by a touching tone of voice that went straight to the heart.” “All about her, indeed, was in perfect harmony. Tenderness—the very soul of her nature—was attempered within her by a visible basis of virtue. Modesty, grace—a simple and ingenuous grace, a modesty which won esteem—ravishingly inspired and directed every motion. Although slightly lame, she danced uncommonly well. Somewhat slow in her gait, when suddenly compelled, she could find her wings. Later, when the cloister grate had finally closed upon her, one of her greatest inconveniences and mortifications

* The enamel miniature by Petitot in the Louvre can alone, perhaps, do justice to that sunny, animated, high-bred, radiant countenance.

would like it or no. Assuredly, the king has not directed her to come ! Heaven preserve *me* from being the king's mistress ! But, if I were, I should feel very much ashamed to appear in the queen's presence.' Having reached Guise, Maria-Theresa had forbidden anyone to set out before her, and gave a command to the soldiers which formed her escort, not to allow anyone to precede her, whosoever it might be. Madame de la Vallière, therefore, fell into the rear during some space. 'But,' proceeds Mademoiselle, 'as we approached the king, who was thought to be on an adjacent eminence, she made her coachman drive through the fields, and trot as hard as the horses could go. The queen saw it, and, in a great rage, wished to have her stopped. . . . On arriving at the appointed place, the king stayed a moment with the queen, and then went to see Madame de la Vallière, who did not make her appearance that evening. The next day she came to the queen's mass. Although the coach was full they were in a hurry to make room for her, and she dined with the queen. The ladies ate with her during the whole journey. We were two or three days at Avesnes. Madame de Montespan allowed me to play ; she lodged with Madame de Montausier, in one of her apartments which was near the king's chamber ; and it was remarked that from a step between the two rooms, where they had at first placed a sentry to guard the door which opened into the king's quarters, that the said sentry had been removed, and she was still left below. The king often remained quite alone in his chamber there, and Madame de Montespan did not follow the queen.'"

Writers of the present day have been very severe upon this episode of the journey to Avesnes ; it would seem, however, that in that apparent want of respect of the Duchess de la Vallière towards Maria-Theresa there was only an impulse of irresistible gratitude, and a proof—the strongest of all in a mind so naturally gentle—of a love unable longer to restrain itself at a moment when it felt itself vaguely menaced by unexpected Lounities ; only bestowed, perhaps, with a view to disemblem the premeditated retreat of her imperious lover.

And those fears were not groundless, since it was at that very moment that this royal favourite was henceforth and wholly displaced by another—the very same person who had spoken so censoriously on the occasion of poor La Vallière inopportunately presenting herself before the queen at La Fère—Madame de Montespan.

IV.

THE FIRST FAVOURITES OF LOUIS XIV.—MADEMOISELLES ELIZABETH TERNAN AND DE LA MOTTE D'ARGENCOURT—OLYMPE AND MARIE MANCINI.

LOUIS XIV., a prince of the line descending from Henry the Great, had both Italian and Spanish blood in his veins, through Marie de' Medici, his grandmother, and Anne of Austria, his mother. This origin may, perhaps, account for his fervid love of the sex, and that chivalrous spirit which somewhat toned down the otherwise Titanesque ardour of his impulsive nature. His education, confided to Péréfixe, bishop of Rhodéz—somewhat neglected if scanned from the literary stand-point in France which dates from the middle of the Fronde troubles—had been perfect so far as regarded all that bodily exercises could do for his personal graces. He rode admirably, was an excellent swordsman, and his diligent perusal of the Spanish tales and romances had initiated him thoroughly in all their thousand exploits in the field of gallantry. He excelled in the knack of craftily placing a ladder of silken rope under a balcony, and escalading from terrace to terrace, until the apartments of his mother's maids-of-honour were invaded. He danced with an appropriate grace in all the court festivals, rattled the dice fearlessly, and kept up the ball of life right royally, so that altogether Anne of Austria was extravagantly proud of her magnificent son and monarch.

so La Fontaine* terms him—that of absolute monarchy in France. No traces, scarcely even remembrance of the Fronde, or what remained of it, so lately lurking in the sheltering shades of the Marais, could now be met with. The heroes of those days were either dead or dispersed: the coadjutor, Cardinal de Retz, had condemned himself to an unbragous solitude in order to pay his debts, where the only consolation he had was derived from an active correspondence with a few devoted friends, and the Marchioness de Sevigné, his kinswoman.† There he wrote his Memoirs, whilst cherishing tender recollection in his heart and deep regret in his soul. When a cause to which a man has devoted himself is lost, he often seeks consolation in describing the stirring scenes he has passed through:—a soothing retrogression to one's youth and fresh feelings. Solitude invests itself with such reminiscences, and our life is thus, as it were, mentally for the moment renewed. So, therefore, did De Retz pen his Memoirs, whilst the Duke de Beaufort‡ went to fight the Turks upon a distant shore, in the service of the most serene republic of Venice. The new and restrictive system of Louis not leaving verge enough for those uncontrollable and adventurous spirits who could only breathe in the tempestuous atmosphere of popular commotions, the more fiery Frondeurs sought death in foreign countries, when their native land no longer throbbed with the feverish convulsions of civil war.

The loves of Louis and Mademoiselle de la Vallière belonged, it may be remarked, to the time of the Fronde: they were connected with Saint-Germain, his minority, and the regency of Anne of Austria; with that queen's maids-of-honour, and Henrietta of England; with the *mousquetaires*, and the licentious allurements of a court—itself half Frondeur. With the more enduring passion for Madame de Montespan then, and

* Fables, Book II. "Les Deux veulent instruire le fils de Jupiter," a fable having allusion to the Duke de Maine.

† Madame de Sevigné's "Letters," part I. She does not disguise her profound admiration for Cardinal de Retz.

‡ The Duc des Halles died bravely at the siege of Corica in 1699, fighting so desperately against the Turks that he was cut to pieces in the action, and his body could not be recovered.

the monarchy of Louis XIV., a new epoch was about to commence—that of an absolute, magnificent, and almost Oriental rule. The king now found himself so unrestricted in every way, political and domestic, as to be able to indulge his most unbridled caprices; to do that which was entirely illegal, commit open adultery, and live in public intercourse with his married mistresses. On all sides he found his path beset by flatterers, poets, and painters ready to deify his passions, like those of the Babylonian kings: by them he was glorified as Jupiter, whose nod shook all Europe, or as the youthful Apollo driving his radiant car, followed by troops of the lovely and obedient hours—or rather perhaps *hours*.

Françoise-Athénaïs de Rochechouart-Mortemart belonged to a race illustrious by its antiquity, and still more by a certain *tour d'esprit*, peculiar to the Mortemarts, which had passed into a proverb. At twenty she had espoused a Gascon gentleman, the Marquis de Montespan, and became distinguished in the great world by “honourable sentiments, and strict propriety of conduct,” and lived altogether in such good report as to give little promise of furnishing another royal favourite to France. Appointed lady of the palace to the infant-queen by the favour of the Duke d’Orleans, on her first appearance at court, her remarkable loveliness and ready wit did not receive that attention which they afterwards obtained from its magnificent master, whose fancy happened to be then otherwise occupied. She thought only of pleasing the queen, like Scheherazade, by relating amusing tales, or whiling away, by her pleasant jocularities and witty sayings, the long hours passed in expectation by Maria-Theresa—who, it is well known, always awaited the king’s return to the royal apartments ere retiring to rest. She had generally a long time thus to wait, for he frequently passed a great portion of the night in reading despatches, the contents of which La Vallière—who, by the way, did not meddle with politics—might have readily revealed to him. To this exemplary assiduity, to these delicate and devoted attentions, the lady of the palace added a piety—she took the sacrament once every week—which fairly enchanted the queen. However, notwithstanding this

triumph of their pestilent maxims. La Fontaine, Molière, and Boileau placed their genius at the service of the king's evil passions; and in return they received gratifications and encouragement at his hands: they, in fact, constituted themselves his poets.

The influence of Madame de Montespan was very considerable in the choice of ministers of state; she contributed greatly to weaken Colbert's power—who was firmly devoted to Mademoiselle de la Vallière and the early love of the king—which dated from the fall of Fouquet. The somewhat *bourgeois* ideas and ways of Colbert were not in harmony with the supercilious and self-glorifying manners of Madame de Montespan. The haughty marchioness had never reflected upon what a stupendous work that was of the finance minister—or even the realization of a thought of his—which had for its object and was in exact relation with the greatness of the monarchy, as well as the glory and power of the French king.

The new war entered upon by Louis XIV. owed its origin to Madame de Montespan's ascendancy, and was a revenge for her wounded pride. The Dutch had insulted the Great Monarch—"abased by the influence of a fallen woman," as their pamphlets phrased it. The passage of the Rhine coincided with the taking of Antwerp and the rapid march upon Amsterdam. It was necessary therefore to punish that insolent republic of traders and pamphleteers. The Marchioness de Montespan could not endure to see the sun of Louis the Great obscured. His reign was that of the court nobility, which had succeeded that characterized by the expressive term of *l'esprit gentilhomme*. It was a gallant sight to behold all that cavalcade of noble seigneurs set out alert and joyous for the wars. Madame de Montespan was, as it were, the expression of the race, in its form, spirit, and elegance. Sprung from the upper world of rank and title, she became not only goddess supreme of the king's household, but was the inspiration of musketeers, light cavalry, and gendarmes. Her glance inspired them with victory, and her voice commanded its achievement. Whilst the character of the Roman woman is

highly exalted throughout our classical authors, it seems forgotten that in the castles and manor-houses of the mediæval nobility and gentry of Europe there existed and was signally displayed the like kind of devotion, accompanied at the same time by less ostentation and infinitely more grace.

Under the sway of Madame de Montespan, Versailles entirely changed its aspect. The new buildings were designed and erected upon the highest level there, as an addition to the old hunting château. At the base of those buildings vast stairs of marble led on one side to the fountain of Neptune, and on the other to the lake dug out by a regiment of Swiss guards.* Below the orangery stood a sheet of still, pellucid water, in which the swans mirrored themselves; whilst orange, pomegranate, and lemon trees yielded the perfume of their rich blossoms under shelter of the woods of Satory. In the centre, a vast avenue, terminated by a lake or canal, was used for fêtes by torchlight; and right and left stretched the park, intersected with avenues and plantations. In a conspicuous spot was placed a statue of the Hunting Diana in Ionian Marble, and in its features were reproduced those of Mademoiselle de la Vallière—the king wishing to recall the memory of those mysterious rendezvous at Versailles with the gentle girl, who, when chaste as Diana, had from those thickets launched her arrows and then retired within the shade of their deepest solitude. The gardens of Versailles became altogether a myth, or rather a royal idyl, recited in honour of Louis XIV.† The pagan idea breathed there in marble, and revealed itself in the admirable group of the Bath of Apollo; the sun-god bearing the features of “his Most Christian Majesty” Louis the *Dieudonné*. The nymphs surrounding him, in like manner reproduced the attributes of those earthly divinities which ministered to his amours and caprices, “the god of day being attended by his *favourite* nymphs, who bathe him with perfumes.”‡

After the plan projected by Mansard, there ought to have

* Louis XIV. made a few changes, which remain at the present day as he left them.

† *Déscription de Versailles, par ordre du roi, 1697.*

‡ This group is still called *Les Bains d'Apollon*.

However that might be, Madame Scarron found it peremptorily necessary to obtain some employment whereby to gain a livelihood. She was willing, therefore, to expatriate herself to secure it; and when declaring her readiness to go to any part of the world, if she could by that means secure a respectable position in some great household, she was wont to say, "My heart is perfectly free, would always be so, and will ever remain so"—a cold and arid declaration, savouring not a little of spitefulness and irreflection. "One ought to reckon very little upon mankind," she wrote about the same time; "when I needed nothing I could have obtained everything, and now that I am in want of everything, I get only refusals."*

Persevering in her suit to the king about the pension, she showed much flattery and obsequiousness towards Madame de Montespan; for, writing to Madame de Thiange to procure her an interview with the royal favourite, she winds up with the honeyed phrase—"that I may not reproach myself with having quitted France before seeing the *Marvel of Beauty*"—that marvel of beauty being, be it remembered, doubly an adulteress; a condition of life not at all in accordance with the scrupulous fastidiousness of Madame Scarron's outward behaviour, or the singular rigidity of that apostate Calvinist's subsequent moral code. Notwithstanding, however, all her flattery of the Montespan, finding that her petitions to the king and her memorials to his ministers had one and all remained without reply, the widow determined to accept a proposal made by the Princess de Nemours, that she should accompany her to Lisbon on the occasion of her marriage with the Infante Alphonso of Braganza, in the capacity of secretary and companion; with the reasonable prospect of a good match and an appointment as lady-of-honour.

An audience of the king, however, was at last obtained, and by it the restoration of the pension of two hundred pistoles, Louis XIV. even deigning to add to that favour some few gracious words which, on certain occasions, he knew so well how to bestow. The friendly greeting of the monarch

* *Letter of Madame de Nemours.*

was owing to a negotiation brought to a successful issue by Madame de Thiange on behalf of Madame Scarron, through the intercession of Madame d'Albret. It has been mentioned that a certain mystery attended the birth of the first offspring of Madame de Montespan—the king not daring then to own that she was the mother of his children.* The Duke de Maine, about three years old and sickly, had, with a sister younger than himself, been put out to nurse. This secret it was determined to reveal to Madame Scarron, and confide to her care the education of those two children. It was necessary to deceive the nurses as to their parentage, carefully screen them from the prying eye of the court, and Madame de Montespan believed the Widow Scarron perfectly capable of keeping such a secret. The Duke de Vivonne, who stood highly in her esteem, and was a frequenter of Ninon de l'Enclos' house, begged her to accept the offer. Ninon backed the duke by saying, that "really she ought to refuse him nothing."

Tradition will have it that the widow was unwilling to accept the charge save under the king's own command; but it is reasonable to suppose that this condition was not rigorously exacted, Madame Scarron having too much penetration and intelligence not to foresee the vast perspective that opened before her in the great secret thus confided to her. The matter was therefore settled, and the voyage to Lisbon abandoned, greatly to the displeasure of the affianced princess.†

Madame de Montespan's patronage of the Widow Scarron was not altogether disinterested; it was rather a matter of mutual convenience. The cautious, serious, self-contained de-

* The first child, born in 1669, had only lived three months. Louis had four children afterwards by Madame de Montespan:—1, The Duke de Maine; 2, the Count de Vexin; 3, Mademoiselle de Nantes; 4, Mademoiselle de Blois.

† Mademoiselle d'Aumale, daughter of the Duke de Nemours, of the house of Savoy, was married to the heir-apparent of the Portuguese crown. This wrong-minded, restless, and intriguing woman bestowed her affections on Don Pedro, the brother of her consort, and eventually through her machinations accomplished the latter's imprisonment as a lunatic; a measure which his own intemperate passions rendered only too easy of accomplishment. She became the wife of his successor under the sanction of a papal bull.

ill-starred Diana became a mother, and the ordeal entailed upon her by maternity was such as to rapidly undermine her health and deteriorate her beauty. With his usual selfishness, the loss of Louis' love followed the loss of her attractions. When the dying favourite became conscious that but few hours of this life remained to her, she solicited as a last favour that she might see the king once more. Louis XIV. had the barbarity to refuse her earnest request. The royal sensualist had a horror of death-beds, and was naturally averse to be brought in close contact with subjects of self-reproach. On this occasion, however, his confessor ventured to expostulate; and at length the remorse-stricken seducer was induced to grant the wish of the heart-broken victim of his profligacy. He found her "faded, shrunk, and ghastly—all unlike the radiant idol whom for a few brief months he had worshipped; and, selfish egotist as he was, he could not restrain his tears. Her glazing eyes were fixed upon his countenance, her clammy hand grasped convulsively his own; her livid lips quivered in the last effort at speech, as she besought him to pay off her debts, and sometimes remember her. Louis promised all she asked; and, sinking back exhausted, she gasped out a few indistinct words to the effect that she should die happy, as she had seen the king shed tears at her fate."*

The death-bed of this youthful favourite of the epicurean monarch inflicted a keen though transitory pang upon his pleasure-hardened heart. Nevertheless, it sufficed to give the death-blow to his fast-waning affection for Madame de Montespan. The unfeeling exultation she had manifested at her rival's decease severed the last link of the no longer roseate chain, which the monarch had found latterly more and more wearisome to him. Such a mortal agony—such a closing scene, without repentance, and almost without hope—made a deep impression for a while even upon his egotistic nature, and which amounted to something like remorse; whilst his better feelings revolted against the heartless self-gratulation of the very woman by whose means he had been

involved in so tragical a catastrophe. Nor was his horror at her outrageous conduct lessened by a rumour which reached his ears, and which the Princess Palatine pointedly alludes to in her memoirs, that the unhappy young duchess died from poison, which she herself asserted had been administered to her through the machinations of Madame de Montespan. The niece of the latter, Madame de Caylus, denies that assertion, and stigmatizes it as a shameful calumny; but, however that might be, it is quite clear that the beauty and wonder of a brief season was soon forgotten amid the new pleasures and new interests by which she was succeeded. "The populace only regretted the brilliant spectacle of her gorgeous coach, with its eight cream-coloured horses, for she had neither sympathized in their sorrows nor relieved their necessities;* while the courtiers merely remembered the profusion of her entertainments and the splendour of her saloons, and looked forward with confidence to the reign of a new favourite, who might once more supply them with the same luxuries."†

XI.

THE WIDOW SCARRON CREATED MARCHIONESS DE MAINTENON—RIVALRY OF THE MARCHIONESSES DE MONTESPAN AND MAINTENON—THEIR DAILY QUARRELS—THE LATTER APPOINTED MISTRESS OF THE ROBES TO THE DAUPHINESS—THE NEW FAVOURITE, PROMPTED BY THE CLERGY, RESOLVES TO BRING LOUIS XIV. TO REPENTANCE—SHE CAUSES A RUPTURE BETWEEN THE KING AND MADAME DE MONTESPAN, WHO QUITS THE COURT.

Thus had a strange caprice of fate brought into close relations two women who were leading a widely different mode

* "You must imagine her," writes Madame de Sevigné, in her own charming and epigrammatic vein, "precisely the reverse of the little violet which hid itself among the herbage, and which blushed alike to be a mistress, a mother, and a duchess."

† "Siècle de Louis XIV."

of the princes and princesses, and that being desirous of keeping the Count de Toulouse with her, the king had had him fetched away. It is said that she flew into such a furious rage as to make a great outcry, and even to say several things which it would not be even prudent to repeat, if, indeed, it were true that she had said them. She has set out from Paris as if on her road to Fontevault."

Though a hasty and intemperate woman, there was something noble and generous in the character of Madame de Montespan; and when she learned that the king refused to let her have the custody of his children, the fallen favourite resolutely shut herself up with one of her younger daughters, then suffering from a dangerous attack of small-pox, careless of the risk to her own beauty from contagion. Her pride, however, remained deeply wounded; for she considered the conduct of Madame de Maintenon as a cold and calculated treason, which had obtained a stealthy triumph over her in the favour of the great king. Already the quick-witted Mortemart divined that, in his inmost heart, Louis XIV. belonged to the strong-minded widow. The latter, true to her maxim that "there is nothing more clever than an irreproachable conduct," had the superior ability to plead successfully the cause of virtue and religion. It was at the same time the lostiest mode of ousting her haughty rival. The episode of the unhappy young Duchess de Fontanges, which served to complicate the imbroglio, also helped to bring about the denouement. Madame de Montespan saw clearly enough the anomalous position of the fair trio of favourites in their then relation to Louis XIV. "The king has now three mistresses," she one day exclaimed, furiously; "I in name, that girl Fontanges in fact, and you in heart." It was time, therefore, that she should disappear from court; so she took her departure sullenly and wrathfully, leaving the arena free to her victorious rival, who still, however, held an equivocal position with regard to the king, but already looked upon as of the highest importance in the eyes of all.

XII.

CHARACTER AND SWAY OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—CHANGE OF POLICY OF LOUIS XIV. THROUGH THE LEAGUE OF AUGSBURG—RELIGIOUS PERSECUTIONS—MADAME DE MAINTENON PERSUADES THE KING TO REVOKE THE EDICT OF NANTES—PROSCRIPTION OF THE CALVINISTS.

BITTERLY as the Marchioness de Montespan must have felt her banishment from court, and, with the complete ascendancy of Madame de Maintenon, the king's firm determination never again to regard his former favourite in any other light than that of a friend and the mother of his children, her long experience of Louis' character must have gradually prepared her for such a termination to the relations which had so long existed between them. The final blow to her sway, and the invidious delivery of it by her successful rival at the king's command, was nevertheless deeply and severely felt by the high-spirited Mortemart. She had been long painfully conscious of the decay of her influence; but the mortification of the ambitious woman was doubly enhanced by the reflection that she owed her fall mainly to the newly-acquired ascendancy over Louis of a woman whom she had herself rescued from destitution, and in whose behalf she had sedulously sought to overcome the deep-seated repugnance of her royal lover. The contrast in the characters of these two celebrated favourites affords a curious study of the varied idiosyncrasies of the feminine mind. In the ideas and projects of Madame de Montespan there was an abundance of all that was generous, brilliant, and *grandiose*—peace, war, fêtes, carrousels—everything that was noble, magnificent, and vainglorious. The splendours of Versailles manifested that sovereignty of the arts, that perception of beauty in form and colour, which during the heyday of her favour had been then inaugurated so signally. With the reign of Madame de Maintenon everything was about to take

have shown but little demonstration of feeling: her severe and rigidly religious ideas not admitting of those tender and loving sensibilities which despair wrings from the hearts of most when placed face to face with death. Her eyes remained dry, and her countenance resigned before the decree of Heaven. Madame de Maintenon, a Roman Catholic by conversion, was doubtless a Calvinist in form and spirit, and had preserved that cold and cruel scrutiny of mankind, as well as that stern resignation to the will of Providence which belongs to the school of Calvin. During his long agony, and throughout which everything was set in order with the most heroic fortitude by the king whilst awaiting the last dread summons, Madame de Maintenon played only a secondary part. Had she been indeed the lawful wife of the monarch, would she not have enacted a very different part? Louis XIV. only spoke of the future that awaited his race to the youthful scion who was about to succeed him, to the Duke of Orleans, the future regent, and some few of his old friends. As for Madame de Maintenon, he bade her only a cold adieu, coupled with a summons to join him speedily in the tomb.*

Two days after the breath had left the body of Louis XIV., Madame de Maintenon was seen very calmly and carefully arranging the furniture of her chamber in her favourite asylum of St. Cyr, and regulating, as its superior, the duties of that convent. There she received some visits of ceremony—from the regent, to tell her that her pension would be continued to her, and she was also visited by some of the princesses, who were well disposed towards one who had been the king's companion for so many years, and the governess of his legitimated children. In that solitude of St. Cyr, *Madame la Supérieure* remained in bed almost the entire day, unless some person of consequence came to visit her, as it were to gaze on a wreck of a past age.† Time speeds swiftly, and the spirit of the next age was so widely different!

* "Happily, however, we shall never see each other again." It is said that Madame de Maintenon was not very much pleased at receiving such an epitaph, and only told it as the *Grand Monarque*.

† The Great Peter, when on a stroll through France, paid a visit, during which, curiosity was plainly evinced with respect to

The system inaugurated by Law, the financier, succeeded, with all the bold and brilliant features of the regency, and the court took little heed of her death when it occurred at the age of seventy-eight.* How little did the eighteenth century resemble the seventeenth—the spirit, grandeur, and even manners were changed ! After Mademoiselle de la Vallière—the time of the Fronde—all youth, joy, and hope ; after Madame de Montespan—the expression of conquest and glory—had come Madame de Maintenon, who had recalled the king to a sense of duty and the necessity of repentance and salvation—calling the old man's attention to the fact that from the Château de Marly could be descried the great Capetian piles which shrouded the vaults of Saint-Denis ; and that solemn menace constituted her strength and maintained her power.

* Madame de Maintenon died 15th April, 1719.

The faction opposed to his rights, and which Bestucheff had created and for a long time directed, still subsisted in spite of the disgrace of the old courtier. Other leaders had succeeded him in his arduous career, but the moment had not yet arrived when the union of new interests or the efforts of new factions cemented by the audacious Machiavellism of Catherine were to render that princess sufficiently powerful to precipitate her unfortunate husband from the throne.

Henceforward, full of her schemes, she flattered all vanities, all prejudices—seduced the nobles, the clergy, the people, and mixed up political intrigues with affairs of the heart; for it must be remarked that the success of her ambitious plans never cost her the sacrifice of any vice and that her very corruption created her grandeur. Disgusted with her husband—a smoker, a drunkard, and a gamester—and seeking compensation in illicit indulgences, she had in a short time progressed far. Four or five lovers had succeeded each other in the arms of this young grand-duchess, already a woman strong in her temperament, and who feeling keenly, proportioned her consolations to her unhappiness. The first was Sergius Soltikoff, chamberlain of the prince, and by him ordered to amuse his wife with ingenious festivals during the languor of a feigned malady. The penetrating curiosity of the courtiers discovered the mystery of these amours; however, the effrontery of the two lovers mocked at the stupidity of the prince. Irritated at the accusations with which malevolence, as Peter imagined, pursued his favourite, he defended his chamberlain, and maintained him in office, amidst the bitter derision of the whole court. Elizabeth was also the more easily persuaded, because she troubled herself little about morals provided there was no scandal, and lubricity was masked by some bigotry.

Soltikoff abused a fortune so complaisant. Beloved and happy, he grew indiscreet, excited jealousy, and saw himself in an instant overthrown. Elizabeth civilly banished him from court, and he died in exile. His disgrace was the work of Chancellor Bestucheff, who desired to advance from the favourite to the master—destroy the former to seize on the

latter, in order to maintain himself in all the offices he had accumulated in his own hands, and which made him the most powerful man in the empire.~

It is said that Catherine regretted her first lover, till the young Poniatowsky, who was to be the second, appeared at St. Petersburg, and soon occasioned Soltikoff to be forgotten. Handsome, gallant and lively, he speedily engaged the affections of the youthful and amorous grand-duchess. The happiness of Stanislaus Poniatowsky was still more ephemeral than that of his predecessor, probably because he was more indiscreet. His fatuity exceeded all bounds. Elizabeth ordered him to quit Russia, and he obeyed; but the passion of the grand-duchess and the policy of Bestucheff soon caused him to return. Poniatowsky re-appeared at St. Petersburg in the quality of minister plenipotentiary of the Republic and King of Poland at the court of the Empress Elizabeth. Henceforward throwing aside all modesty and prudence, Catherine never quitted her lover; and was so little reserved in her connexion, that all the Russians accused the young Pole of being the father of her second child, the Princess Anne, of whom the grand-duchess was soon confined, and who died almost in her birth.*

At this time the Empress Elizabeth—completely brutified

* It is well known that Catherine, when seated on the Imperial throne, rewarded her lover with the crown of Poland. His disastrous reign evinced that love, in bestowing a crown, is as blind as favour in distributing places and honours. Stanislaus was the most amiable of men, but the weakest of kings. How was it possible that so pusillanimous a being should for a moment have gained the esteem of Europe? Yet by whom was he not admired? What contradiction between his sentiments, his language, and his conduct! At the last diet the generous Nuncio Kamar said to him publicly on seeing him waver, "What, sir! are you no longer the same who said to us, when signing the Constitution of the 3rd of May, 'May my hand perish rather than subscribe anything contrary to this?' All Europe charges you with being Catherine's king: justify her at least for having put the sceptre into your hand, by showing that you are capable of wielding it." Yet only a few days after, the unworthy Stanislaus signed that compact which dismembered Poland for the second time, and by which he formally acknowledged himself factious and rebellious, in establishing a rational constitution, which gave him, as a king, more authority, and promised his nation more happiness and freedom. It was not, however, without reluctance that he signed. He said to Sievers, who conjured him to repair to Grodno to head the confederates, "I will never be guilty of such baseness. Let the empress take back her crown: let her send me to

cause for a short time she had conducted a diplomatic and political marriage. Catherine's friend resembled her, as her sister did the emperor, in her habits and morals: she enjoyed life as much, and after the same fashion, as the empress, and like her was idolized by the world and by cheaply bought men of letters. In the time of the Empress Elizabeth, Catherine had already conspired with Bestucheff against her husband, of which Peter thought he possessed such decisive proofs that he excepted the ex-chancellor from the operation of the general amnesty for political offences which he proclaimed on his accession, and expressly declared this as his reason for the exception.

Peter's conduct towards his wife is perhaps the clearest proof of that unsoundness of mind which was always more or less perceptible: now impelling him to the adoption of extravagant and senseless measures, now causing him to fall into a state of the greatest timidity and irresolution. Sometimes he appeared wholly unconcerned about her private life, allowed himself to be deceived respecting her pregnancy, paid her debts, made her presents of estates, and increased her yearly income; sometimes again he threatened her with a cloister, and spoke publicly of her conduct in the strongest and coarsest terms. In fact, it was not long before Poniatowski had a successor in the affections of the grand-duchess; a third intrigue engaged Catherine before the death of the Empress Elizabeth, and no one doubted it at the court.

Gregory Orloff, this new lover, occupied a low rank in the guards; but if he had not the advantage of illustrious birth, nature had endowed him with compensating gifts, in a masculine beauty and intrepid character. Catherine had visited him regularly by night, in the small house in which he resided in the neighbourhood of the Winter Palace; she had confided to him her most secret designs, and had made him the most determined of the conspirators. The five brothers Orloff formed the centre of this conspiracy, among whom Gregory played the chief part. The accomplices of these scandalous adulteries became the natural promoters of her usurpation; for the distance is small, for a subject, between

dishonouring the bed of a king, and raising his hand against his throne. Peter III., in fact, meditated the imprisonment of his wife, when he knew that for the *third* time she was about to become a mother through her guilty amours. He had visited Prince Ivan in the fortress of Schlasselbourg, and, as it was generally thought, with the intention of calling him to the succession of the throne. But it seems that this unfortunate prince, afflicted by imbecility or madness, the effect of long captivity, could not answer his views. Then, it is said, he cast his eyes on his uncle, Prince George of Holstein, whom he invited to his court, and loaded with honours: this choice was little calculated to flatter the wishes of the nation, because one foreigner thus introduced another. However this may be, Peter III., on the point of opening the campaign against Denmark, was not inclined to quit Moscow before he had incarcerated Catherine in a state prison, and declared her son Paul Petrovitch illegitimate. According to Levesque, this was to give to the scandals of the court a credibility which they could not have in the eyes of justice. It seems, however, even by referring to himself, that there was a sufficiency of accumulated proof of the divers adulteries, or rather the permanent adultery, of Catherine, to enable the tribunals who would have been called upon to pronounce sentence on this grave question, to have decided from other evidence than those court scandals. Catherine, adds this writer, was compelled to conspire to preserve her liberty, that of her son, and even his life. Writers less indulgent, or less loose in their morals, have expressed the same fact, by saying, "It was necessary that Catherine should conspire, to escape the punishment she had so richly merited."* The fate and the faults of her husband too well served this audacious woman. As we have seen, Peter III. had created enemies in all classes of the nation by his German preferences; and even at this juncture the war against Denmark to recover the Duchy of Schleswig (a

* Levesque justifies his views by saying that Peter avowed his intention of marrying his mistress Vorontzof; and, in order to accomplish that object, it was necessary that the head of Catherine should fall.

an opportunity of remarking, for the first time, the grace and agility of him who in the sequel gained such an ascendancy over her.

Catherine having thus traversed the ranks of the soldiers on horseback, repaired to the palace which the Empress Elizabeth had occupied. She dined there before an open window, at each moment saluting the people. That people, overpowered at such an excess of goodness, fell every instant on their knees; and proclaiming, in the intoxication of their joy, the name of their virtuous sovereign, repeated with enthusiasm the oath of eternal fidelity. It was what, in the style of a royal historiographer, or salaried publisher of a gazette, would be called a touching family picture. But truthful narration has other language, in its profound indignation, to paint these nauseous court parades, where successful crime tramples over popular stupidity and baseness.

At the very moment when the troops which were then in St. Petersburg, and the senate also, pronounced the deposition of Peter III.—who of all others knew least of what was passing in the capital—nothing was really lost. What, then, whilst thus in less than two hours he lost the crown and empire of the czars, *did the unfortunate Emperor Peter?* He departed gaily in his carriage from Oranienbaum to Peterhof, followed by giddy youths, among charming women, who, still bewildered by the pleasures of the preceding day, joyously anticipated those of the morrow. A single follower, one servant alone—Bressau, of Monaco, who had come to St. Petersburg as a hairdresser—had thought of Peter when all the world had abandoned him, and sent him salutary advice, had it not arrived too late. Astounded, overwhelmed with what he read, Peter III. did not seek resources in the zeal of some friends still attached to his cause. He adopted none of the energetic counsels which they tendered. More weak than the flock of feeble women who surrounded him, he persuaded himself that the audacious Catherine would consent only to use half her power, and allowed the Count Vorontzof, brother of his mistress, to depart, who had eagerly offered himself to negotiate an

accommodation ; but who, in reality, was only anxious to place himself in safety by tendering his submission to the empress ; in fact, he remained with her. Munich advised the unfortunate monarch to place himself at the head of 3000 soldiers of Holstein, then at Oranienbaum, and march to St. Petersburg. This vigorous proposal frightened the women and courtiers, and one of them suggested the more prudent advice of going to Cronstadt, where they would find a powerful navy, and a city defended by the sea. A general officer preceded to announce his fugitive master ; but when the latter arrived himself with his suite, he found his envoy already a prisoner ; and when, answering to the summons of the sentinel, " Who goes there ? " Peter advancing exclaimed, " I, the emperor ; " the soldier answered, " There is no emperor. " And in fact, to confirm this sinister reply, the garrison, completely armed, was to be seen lining the shore, silence being only interrupted by the cry of " Live Catherine ! " and by the menace of Admiral Talitzin to fire into the yacht if she did not sheer off. Even at this decisive moment Peter had not the resolution or courage to follow the advice of Munich, who urged him to despise these threats, told him they would not venture to fire upon him, and that he ought to land and conduct himself like an emperor. Still the affrighted prince shrank back ; but his aide-de-camp Goudovitch stopped him, saying, " Prince, put your arm within mine, and leap on shore ; no one will dare to fire on us, and Cronstadt will still belong to your majesty. " The wretched Peter, incapable of listening to this generous advice, rushed into the cabin of the yacht, in the midst of the fainting women. Time was not even allowed to weigh the anchor ; the cable was cut, and the vessel gained the distant offing by sweeps.

When the yachts were at some distance from the port, the men rested on their oars. It was a fine night in July, and Munich and Goudovitch sat on deck in mournful silence. The steersman went down into the cabin to the czar for his instructions. Peter ordered Munich to be called, and said to him, " Field-marshal, I perceive that I was too late in following your advice, but you see to what extremities I am

strophe. On his removal from Petershof, the czar was still blind to the fate that awaited him. Thinking that he should be detained but a short time in prison, previous to his being sent into Germany, he sent a message to Catherine, asking her to let him have a favourite negro who amused him by his oddities, together with a dog he was fond of, his violin, a Bible, and a few romances; at the same time telling her that, disgusted at the wickedness of mankind, he was resolved thenceforward to devote himself to a philosophical life. Not one of these requests was granted, and his plans of retirement were turned into ridicule. He was left in his prison at Roptcha.

He had been there six days without the knowledge of any but the chief conspirators and the soldiers by whom he was guarded, when Alexis, brother of Gregory Orloff, accompanied by an assassin named Teplof, came to him with the news of his speedy deliverance, and asked permission to dine with him. According to the custom of that country, wine-glasses and brandy were brought previous to dinner, and while Teplof amused the czar with some trifling discourse, his chief filled the glasses, and poured a violent poison into that he intended for the prince. The czar, without any distrust, swallowed the potion, on which he presently experienced excruciating pains; a second glass being offered him, on pretence of its giving him relief, he refused it, with reproaches on him that offered it.

He demanded milk with loud cries; but the two murderers offered him poison again, and pressed him to take it. A French valet, much attached to his master, ran to his assistance. The czar threw himself into his servant's arms, exclaiming—"It was not, then, enough to prevent my reign in Sweden and deprive me of the Russian crown, but they will have my life also!"

The valet dared to intercede for his royal master, but the miscreants forced this dangerous visitor to retire, and continued their ill-treatment. In the midst of the scuffle, the youngest of the Princes Baratinusky, who commanded the guard, entered the room. Orloff had thrown the czar upon

his back, and pressed his knee upon his breast; with one hand he seized his throat, and clenched his head with the other. Baratinsky and Teploff then passed a napkin about his neck with a running noose. Peter, in his struggle, scarred Baratinsky's face, and inflicted a mark that was retained for some time by that villain; but the unfortunate czar soon lost his strength, and his murderers accomplished their diabolical purpose.*

Alexis Orloff, after he had strangled the emperor, mounted his horse and eagerly rode off to inform Catherine that her husband was no more. He arrived at the moment when the empress was going to show herself at court. She affected an air of tranquillity; and when Gregory Orloff, having learned that the murder was consummated, presented himself suddenly before her, pale, aghast, and trembling, Catherine received him with calmness, seriously reproved him for the puerility of his emotions, and at once shut herself up with him, Panin, Razomouffski, and other cruel confederates. In this sinister council it was resolved not to make known the death of Peter till the morrow. Catherine, therefore, re-appeared serene amid the crowd of courtiers, dined in public, and held her court with remarkable gaiety; and flatterers said that never had a charming sovereign more brightly shone, environed by the triple splendour of youth, grace, and goodness!

On the next day, the empress, still feigning ignorance of her husband's death, caused it to be announced when she was at table. Bursting into tears, she dismissed the courtiers and foreign ministers, retired to her apartment, and for several days together assumed the mask of profound sorrow. During that time, the following declaration—which Castera calls a masterpiece of cruelty and hypocrisy—was foisted upon the public:—

“The seventh day after our accession to the imperial throne, we received intelligence that the late emperor was attacked by a most violent colic, occasioned by the hæmorrhoids, of

* It has been falsely asserted that Potemkin was with them. Men of undoubted honour, who were then in Russia, denied the assertion; and Potemkin always treated it with disdain.

courage of the Hetman Razomouffski, and the chancellor Vorontzof, Bestucheff's stratagem would have succeeded, and Gregory Orloff been proclaimed emperor of all the Russias.

Count Panin engaged Razomouffski and Vorontzof to represent to Catherine how equally humiliating and dangerous the projected union would be to her. They did so. Catherine affected extreme surprise; thanked the remonstrants for their loyal zeal, but protested that the idea of the marriage they so much dreaded had never once entered her mind; that it was positively without her knowledge that such an odious intrigue had been carried on, and that as Bestucheff was the author of it, she should resent it upon him. Nevertheless she took care not to be severe with the old man, who had only sought to gratify her secret inclinations.

Bestucheff thus saw his project fail without apparently receiving any shock to his influence; he was, on the contrary, every day better received by the empress and the favourite; while Vorontzof experienced from them nothing but coldness, and was glad to prevent a forced retreat by a voluntary exile.

In the meantime the apprehension of seeing Catherine bestow herself on the daring adventurer who had lent a hand to precipitate her unfortunate husband from the throne, occasioned violent murmurs. Several ineffectual plots were set on foot against her and her favourite. One of them for a moment seemed on the point of succeeding. A guard stood at Orloff's door as at that of the empress. One of the sentinels had promised, for a bribe, to deliver him up whilst asleep to three of the conspirators. But the hour was wrongly fixed; and, when the conspirators appeared, the sentinel who was to have seconded them had already been relieved by another. This latter, astonished at seeing three men apply for admission into Orloff's apartments, made so much noise as to bring together others of the guards. The conspirators had but just time to escape under favour of the uniform they wore.

This movement spread alarm over the palace. Catherine's fears were aroused. Imagining that her life was not in safety

at Moscow, she hastened to quit that city, and return to St. Petersburg. The day of her departure was signalized by demonstrations of insolent joy approaching to rage. Her cypher had been placed on a triumphal arch in the great square of Moscow: the populace tore it down and broke it in pieces, after having dragged it through the mire.

Catherine arrived at St. Petersburg the day of the anniversary of her accession to the throne, and she omitted nothing that could render her entry magnificent and imposing. The pompous spectacle, however, raised more astonishment than joy, and tended only to increase the irritation of the public mind. The number of malcontents augmented; conspiracies were multiplied, and became more dangerous by the names of consequence that were associated with them. Public report counted among the enemies of Catherine the most powerful personages of the empire, and even some who had served her with the utmost zeal. The Hetman Razomouffski, Count Panin, and his brother* were of this number; and it seemed certain that if these different conspirators could have turned their eyes on a prince worthy of being the object of their wishes, Catherine would have lost the crown. But some wanted to raise Paul Petrovitch to the throne, while others were desirous of recalling the unhappy Ivan; and all embarrassed, all irresolute, they coincided only in the plan of dethroning the empress, without agreeing upon her successor.

Catherine, secretly advertised of the design of Panin and of Razomouffski, was for a moment ready to have them arrested; but having only such evidence as was but little to be relied on, or suspicions in which she might be deceived, she felt, after all, that, by an ill-timed severity against men of such high consideration, she ran the risk of occasioning a general insurrection. She, therefore, thought it might be expedient to employ a little artifice—a means which had frequently been of use to her. She had repaid with seeming ingratitude the services of Princess Dashkoff, and even since she had been

* General Panin, brother of the minister, gained considerable reputation in the first Turkish war.

they thought fast locked in sleep, but who, roused by some noise, whether made by themselves or otherwise, had come out to see what was the matter. The governor authoritatively demanded of Mirovitch the reason of his appearance in arms at the head of the soldiers. Without returning any answer, Mirovitch knocked him down with the butt-end of his firelock, and ordering some of his people to secure him, continued his march.

Having arrived at the corridor into which the door of Ivan's chamber opened, he advanced against the handful of soldiers who guarded the prince. They received him with spirit, and quickly repulsed him. He immediately ordered his men to fire upon them, which they did. The sentinels returned the fire, and the conspirators retreated, though neither on one side or the other was there a single man killed or even wounded.

Mirovitch tried to rally his men, but they insisted on his showing them the order which he said he had received from St. Petersburg. He directly drew from his pocket and read to them a forged decree of the senate, recalling Prince Ivan to the throne, and excluding Catherine from it, because she was gone into Livonia to marry her former favourite, Count Poniatowski. The ignorant and credulous soldiers implicitly gave credit to the decree, and again put themselves in order to obey him. A piece of artillery was now brought from the ramparts to Mirovitch, who himself pointed it at the door of the dungeon, and was preparing to batter the place, but at that instant the door opened, and he entered unmolested with all his followers.

The officers of the guard set over the prince, on hearing Mirovitch give orders to batter in the door, consulted together, and the result was that they came to the dreadful resolution of assassinating the unfortunate captive, undismayed by the vengeance of a desperate force, which (to give any colour to their proceeding) they must have concluded irresistible. They then opened the door, and showed Mirovitch the bleeding body of the murdered prince, and the order by which they were authorized to put him to death if any

attempt should be made to convey him away; at the same time exclaiming, "Behold your emperor!"

Mirovitch, struck with horror, at first started back some paces, then threw himself on the body of Ivan, and cried out, "I have missed my aim; I have now nothing to do but to die." Presently he rose up, returned to the place where he had left the governor in the hands of the soldiers, and surrendering his sword to him, coldly said, "It is I who am now your prisoner."

The next day the body of the unfortunate Ivan was exposed before the church in the Castle of Schlasselbourg, clothed in the habit of a sailor. As soon as it was known, immense crowds of people flocked from the neighbouring towns and from St. Petersburg, and it is impossible to describe the grief and indignation that were excited by the spectacle. The concourse and the murmurs increased to such a degree that a tumult was apprehended. Ivan's body was therefore wrapped up in a sheep-skin, put into a coffin, and buried without ceremony.*

The governor of Schlasselbourg despatched to St. Petersburg a full relation of the horrid outrage of Mirovitch, and of the terrible end of Ivan. Panin immediately sent off a courier to the empress with an exact account of these particulars.

Catherine was then at Riga; and, under a visible impatience of mind, was frequently inquiring after news from the capital: a circumstance by no means unaccountable, if we consider the frequent causes of alarm from plots and cabals with which she had been incessantly harassed since the beginning of her reign. Her inquietude increased from day to day, and she would often rise in the night to ask whether no courier had arrived. Some persons afterwards recollected these circumstances to her disadvantage, as if she was anxiously counting the days since the period when Miro-

* Ivan's father survived in captivity until 1776; his mother had died thirty years before. Anthony Urie left behind him two sons and two daughters by his wife and several natural children, all except the eldest of the princesses born in prison. It was not until 1780 that Catherine released the survivors of this unhappy family.

sumptuous; success increased his pride, of which he soon became the victim.

One day, as he was playing at billiards with Alexis Orloff, he inconsiderately boasted of the favour he enjoyed, and even asserted that it entirely depended on him to remove from Court such persons as were displeasing to him. Orloff made a haughty reply. Upon this a quarrel ensued, in the heat of which Potemkin received a blow that occasioned the loss of an eye. This was not his only misfortune. Gregory Orloff, informed of the affray by his brother, ran to the empress and requested Potemkin's removal from court.

Potemkin retired to Smolensk, his native place, where he remained almost a year in solitude, suffering much from his eye* and his solitary exile from court. At one time he declared his resolution of turning monk, at another vaunted that he should soon become the greatest man in Russia. At length, in a sudden fit, he wrote to the empress, beseeching her to think of him. Her majesty immediately complied with his request, recalled and placed him again in full possession of her favour. Orloff had been for several days enjoying the sports of the chase. His absence afforded an opportunity for installing Potemkin at the palace, and on the return of the old favourite, no complaints or reproaches could remove the new one from his exalted situation.

It may be necessary in this place to explain what were the duties expected from, and the distinguished honours paid to, the favourites of Catherine.

When her majesty had made choice of a new favourite, she created him her general aide-de-camp, in order that he might accompany her wherever she went without incurring public censure. From that period the favourite occupied in the palace an apartment under that of his royal mistress, with which it communicated by a private staircase. The first day of his installation he received a present of 100,000

* It has been reported that the injury done to his eye might have been cured; but that, in his impatience, he burst a slight tumour that had formed on the side of the ball. Segur says, that he purposely put out his eye to remove a blemish that impaired his comeliness.

roubles, and every month he found 12,000 placed on his dressing-table. The marshal of the court was ordered to provide him a table of twenty-four covers, and to defray all his household expenses. The favourite was required to attend the empress wherever she went, and was not permitted to leave the palace without asking her consent. He was forbidden to converse familiarly with other women; and if he went to dine with any of his friends, the absence of the mistress of the house was always required.

Whenever the empress cast her eyes on one of her subjects with the design of raising him to the post of favourite, he was invited to dinner by some one of her female confidantes, on whom she called as if it were by chance. There she would draw the new candidate into discourse, and judge how far he was worthy of her destined favour. When the opinion she had formed was favourable, a significant look apprised the confidante, who, in her turn, made it known to the object of her royal mistress's pleasure. The next day he was examined as to the state of his health by the court physician, and as to some other particulars by Mademoiselle Protasof, one of the empress's ladies, after which he accompanied her majesty to the Hermitage, and took possession of the apartment that had been prepared for his reception. These formalities began upon the choice of Potemkin, and were thenceforth constantly observed.

When a favourite had lost the art of pleasing, there was also a particular manner of dismissing him. He received orders to travel, and from that moment all access to her majesty was denied him; but he was sure of finding at the place of his retirement such splendid rewards as were worthy of the munificent pride of Catherine. It was a very remarkable feature in her character that none of her favourites incurred her hatred or vengeance, though several of them offended her, and their quitting office did not always depend upon herself.

Potemkin's rule commenced at the very time in which the peace of Kutchuk Kainardji was concluded (July, 1774), The dispute with Poland and the rebellion of Pugatschef were

enjoyment of one romantic passion, after the manner of Werther and Siegwart, from the year 1780 till July, 1781. Every one seemed to take an interest in the sovereign's predilection for him. Perhaps he might have acquired as much influence by the qualities of his mind, as those of his heart procured him partisans. Potemkin, however, feared him at last, and from the circumstance of his dying with horrible pains in his bowels, it was pretended that he gave him poison. Catherine in vain lavished on him the most tender cares: her lips received his last breath. He died in the flower of his age. Catherine was inconsolable. She shut herself up for several days, which she passed in all the violence of grief. She accused heaven, would die, would cease to reign, and swore never to love again. She really loved Lanskoï, and her affliction turned into rage against the physician who could not save him, and who was obliged to throw himself at his sovereign's feet to implore her pardon for the impotence of his art. Catherine's love for Lanskoï had been romantic in his life, and her sorrow at his death was not less extravagant; but notwithstanding all this romanticism, she had been also careful to show him substantial proof of her affection at the cost of the country. She bestowed upon him not only all possible titles, orders, and decorations—diamonds, plate, and collections of every kind, but he left behind him in cash a property of 7,000,000 of roubles. A decent and afflicted widow, she went into mourning for her lover, and like another Artemisia, erected for him a superb mausoleum in the gardens of Tzarsko-selo. She suffered more than a year to elapse before she filled up his place, but like a second Ephesian matron, gave him an unworthy successor; this was Yermolof.

The fantastic mourning for Lanskoï had no sooner evaporated, than the empress allowed Potemkin, who presented candidates for every office, to supply her with a substitute for her departed lover. In order to exclude all other pretenders, Potemkin on every such occasion was prepared to fill up the vacancy, and with this view he had for some time made lieutenant Yermolof one of his adjutants. In 1785

this man became the declared favourite of the empress, and soon ventured to pursue a course which Lanskoï would never have thought of. He directed Catherine's attention to the tyranny of Potemkin, and gave her some hints respecting his behaviour towards Sahim Gherai. The empress expressed her displeasure without naming the person who had made her acquainted with the unhappy fate of the Khan. Potemkin, however, easily guessed that no man in the empire would dare to speak ill of him to the empress except Yermolof. He therefore threateningly replied, "That must have been said by the *White Moor*!"—as he was accustomed to call Yermolof, on account of his fair countenance and flat nose. Catherine did not hesitate to reproach Potemkin severely for his harsh and unjust conduct towards the Khan; and she even wavered for some months between the favourite and this son of the Titans, whom she regarded as her protector and the creator of her glory and greatness. At the end of June, 1786, a fresh scene occurred, by which the empress was compelled to declare either for the one or for the other. Yermolof had made a new attempt to alienate the empress from Potemkin; the latter, therefore, haughtily insisted that either Yermolof or he should retire from her service. Catherine felt herself constrained to adhere to Potemkin, and Yermolof went upon his travels. During the course of the year he had been loaded with riches, and on his departure he was furnished with 100,000 roubles and imperial recommendations to the Russian ambassadors at all the European courts. On the day after his departure Momonof, another adjutant of Potemkin, occupied his place.

About this period Potemkin repeatedly travelled from St. Petersburg to Tauris and back, with all the expedition of a courier, whilst he was engaged in the building of Kherson, in order to prepare a splendid triumph for the empress. The neglected Sahim Gherai hastened thither to meet him, and make him acquainted with the urgency of his wants; but Potemkin, instead of rendering him any assistance, banished him to Kaluga, where he fell into a state of the deepest poverty. He then conceived that he might find some relief

Charles XII. might have taught him experience; but he had forgotten them, and only desired to remember the traditions of his fabulous ancestors, and not the historical examples of his forefathers.

In the following campaign the Russians took Bender; and the military operations would have been more decisive had Potemkin, who united jealousy to his other vices, not thwarted and in 1789 circumvented Marshal Romantzof, whose great reputation now threw him into the shade. Wearied by reverses, the Ottoman Porte opened conferences at Fokshani. England and Prussia actively plotted to prevent peace, and excited against Joseph II., the ally of the empress, so many embarrassments in Hungary, Brabant, and the territory of Liege, that the death of that prince was accelerated by anxiety and vexation. The star of Catherine triumphed over all. The Turks, who alone remained unconquered, experienced at Ismail a new disaster, which crushed them. Suvarof, having received from Potemkin orders to capture the place in three days, made two successive assaults; twice repulsed, he rushed a third time to the ramparts, at the foot of which 15,000 Russians were stretched dead. A valour so furious having at length conquered the resistance of the Ottomans, the ill-fated Ismail, given up to all the resentment and ferocity of the Russian soldiers, became the vast tomb of its inhabitants and garrison. Thirty-five thousand Turks there perished, and Suvarof might have bathed himself in blood. The booty of that victory was immense; and the wreck of the population, the unfortunate remnant of a massacre which the weariness of the soldiers had alone spared, was ultimately transferred to Russia (1791). The negotiations commenced at Fokshani, and continued at Jassy, having led to no result, the war was continued under Prince Repnin, who had replaced Potemkin. Jealous of equalling, and perhaps surpassing, the glory of that rival, after having captured Babada, a rich and commercial city of Bulgaria, he marched against the grand vizier, and with 40,000 men attacked 100,000, whom he vanquished and dispersed at Motzim. Potemkin, eager to appropriate the impending

victory, flew with the rapidity of lightning from St. Petersburg, when both armies were ready for battle. He took it for granted that Repnin would certainly await his arrival at the army; but he did no such thing. He offered battle before the arrival of Potemkin, whose custom it was to enjoy the fruits, in the gathering of which he had no share. This signal victory gained by Repnin over the great Turkish army, led to a violent altercation between him and Potemkin,* who came too late to have any participation in the honours of the day. Repnin, however, still remained in the command of the army. Potemkin afterwards did everything in his power to prevent the peace for which Repnin was trying to negotiate, although he clearly saw that the course of events required the Russians to give up their wholesale conquest of Turkish provinces.

Old Marshal Repnin, therefore, to Potemkin's grievous discomfiture, had accomplished more in two months than the haughty favourite had done in three years. The mortification attendant upon his rival's brilliant success rankled like poison in the veins of Potemkin; and not long after his arrival at Yassy, where his head-quarters, or, to speak more correctly, his capital and his court were established, he became gloomy, melancholy, a prey to vexation, and was shortly seized with a malignant fever. In his impatience, he presumed to treat the fever with the same haughty contempt with which he had long been used to treat his fellow men; he determined to struggle with it and overcome it by his iron constitution—laughing at his physicians, and eating salt meat and raw turnips. His disorder growing worse, he desired to be conveyed to Otchakof, his beloved conquest; but had not travelled more than a few versts before the air of his

* His interview with Repnin was a curious scene. "You little Martinist priest," shouted he, (Repnin was a zealous Martinist,) "how durst you undertake so much in my absence? Who gave you any such orders?" Repnin, enraged at being thus accosted, and emboldened by success, dared for once to behave towards the haughty favourite with becoming firmness. "I have served my country," he answered; "my head is not at your disposal, and thou art a devil whom I defy." So saying, he went out of the room in a rage, slamming the door on Potemkin, who rushed after him with his clenched fist. The two Russian heroes were within an ace of pummelling one another.

session of more. It is true Potemkin drew immediately from the imperial coffers; but he also spent a great deal for the empire, and showed himself as much grand prince of Russia as the favourite of Catherine. Zubof had equal command over the public treasury, and never expended a rouble for the public.

What distinguished Potemkin from all his colleagues is, that after losing the heart of the empress, he still retained her entire confidence. Ambition succeeded love in his breast; and, preserving the same unbounded influence, every succeeding favourite was appointed by him and remained subordinate to him.

Plato* Zubof, the twelfth and last of Catherine's avowed favourites, succeeded in some degree to the position which Potemkin had held as a sort of vice-emperor. Zubof had superseded Momonof, who soon wearying of the faded charms of a mistress of sixty, became enamoured of the young princess Sherbatof, and had the courage to avow it and ask permission to marry her. Catherine had pride and generosity enough to grant his request without any reproaches. She saw him married at court to the object of his affection and sent him to Moscow loaded with presents. But it was currently reported that Momonof was so imprudent as to mention to his wife some particulars of his interviews with the empress, and that she divulged them with a levity which Catherine could not forgive. One night, when the husband and wife were gone to rest, the master of the police at Moscow entered their chamber, and after showing them an order from her majesty, left them in the hands of six women and retired to an adjoining room. Then the six women, or rather the six men dressed as women, seized the babbling lady, and having completely stripped her, flogged her with rods in the presence of Momonof, whom they forced to kneel down during the ceremony. When the chastisement was over, the police-master re-entered the room and said, "This is

* This name led the courtiers to say that Catherine ended with *Plato's* love

the way the empress punishes a first indiscretion. For the second, people are sent to Siberia.”

It was in the spring of 1789, when the empress was at Tzarskoeselo, that Momonof was married and dismissed. Lieutenant Zubof commanded the detachment of horse-guards in attendance, and being the only young officer in sight, he owed his preferment to that fortunate circumstance. Nicholas Soltikof, to whom he was distantly related, and who was at that time in high credit, took pains to promote his interest, hoping to find in him a protector against Potemkin, whom he heartily disliked. After some secret conferences in presence of the Mentor,* Zubof was approved, and sent for more ample information to Mademoiselle Protasof and the empress's physician. The account they gave must have been favourable, for he was named aide-de-camp to the empress, received a present of a hundred thousand roubles (10,000*l.*) to furnish him with linen, and was installed in the apartments of the favourites with all the customary advantages. The next day this young man was seen familiarly offering his arm to his sovereign, equipped in his new uniform, with a large hat and feather on his head, attended by his patron and the great men of the empire, who walked behind him with their hats off, though the day before he had danced attendance in their ante-chambers. His own were now filled with aged generals, and ministers of long service, all of whom bent the knee before him. He was a genius discerned by the piercing eye of Catherine; the treasures of the empire were lavished on him, and the conduct of the empress was sanctioned by the meanness and shameful assiduities of her courtiers.†

The new favourite was not quite five-and-twenty years old, the empress was upwards of sixty. Zubof spoke French fluently, was of a polite and pliant disposition, and could

* Soltikof was governor to the grand-dukes, and minister-at-war.

† Zubof being one day hunting, halted with his suite in the road from St. Petersburg to Tzarskoeselo. The courtiers who were going to court, the couriers, the post, all the carriages, and all the peasants were stopped; no one dared pass till the young man thought proper to quit the road; and he stayed in it more than an hour waiting for his game.

about him that commanded respect, notwithstanding his age; and he had all the graces of youth, without the awkwardness that usually attends it. His manners were simple, though courteous and polite. Whatever he said was spoken with reflection. To serious things he paid an attention not expected from youth; he displayed knowledge that announced a very careful education; and a certain gravity that bespoke his rank never forsook him. All the pomp of the Russian empire, which was sedulously exhibited to his view, seemed in nowise to dazzle him. In that brilliant and numerous court he soon appeared more at ease than the grand-dukes themselves, who had not the art of entertaining anybody; so that both court and city soon drew comparisons between them very flattering to the young stranger. The empress herself could not conceal the pain she felt at the dissimilarity between him and the second of her grand-children, whose rude and brutal boyish tricks offended her to such a degree, that she put him under arrest once or twice during the stay of the King of Sweden.

Gustavus had arrived with his uncle and a numerous suite at St. Petersburg on the 25th of August, 1796, where his presence excited the liveliest interest, and nothing was neglected to make him pleased with his reception. All the great men of the empire were eager to participate in the joy of Catherine, who selected such as should give entertainments to her young guest, and fixed the days. It may readily be supposed that during this succession of fêtes the two lovers had frequent opportunities of seeing each other. Conversing and dancing together, they became familiar, and soon appeared to be mutually enchanted. The aged Catherine assumed an appearance of youth, and again indulged in those scenes of innocent joy and pleasure which she had long since renounced. The approaching marriage was no longer a secret; it was the common topic of conversation. The empress addressed the young king and her grand-daughter as though already betrothed, and encouraged them to mutual affection. One day she made them give the *first kiss of love* in her pre-

sence ; the first, no doubt, that the virgin lips of the young princess had ever received.

All seemed to speed happily towards the desired end. The only difficulty that remained was that on the score of religion. Catherine had felt the pulse of her court on this subject, and even consulted the archbishop to know whether her granddaughter might abjure the orthodox faith. Instead of answering in the way she anticipated, he merely replied, " Your majesty is all-powerful." Afterwards, not finding himself supported by his clergy, who he expected would have been more tractable, he was desirous of appearing more Russian than the Russians themselves ; and, to flatter the national pride, he resolved to make a Queen of Sweden of a princess of the Greek church. The king was enamoured, dazzled : the regent appeared to be completely gained. Could it then be supposed that they would reject this arrangement, after such decisive steps had been taken ? The empress, persuaded that there was no room for retreat, left to her favourite ministers, Zubof and Markof, the care of drawing up the contract conformably to her views. On the other hand, the Swedish ambassador formally demanded the princess in marriage, at a special audience granted him for that purpose ; and the day and hour were fixed on which the parties were to be publicly betrothed.

That day—which was the 21st of September—exposed the triumphant and imperious Catherine to the greatest chagrin and humiliation she had ever experienced. The whole court received orders to assemble in full dress in the throne-room. The young princess, habited as a bride, and attended by her sisters, the grand-dukes and their wives, and all the ladies and gentlemen, with the grand-duke, father to the princess, and the grand-duchess, who came from Gatchina to be present at the ceremony of betrothing their daughter, were assembled by seven o'clock in the evening. The empress herself arrived in all imaginable pomp. No one was wanting but the young bridegroom, whose tardiness at first excited astonishment. The repeated going out and coming in of

him as before a sovereign—so difficult is it for slaves to rise from their servility! We must do him the further justice to acknowledge that he did not, like a Mentchikof and a Biren, people the deserts of Siberia; though, at the instigation of Esterhazy and certain French emigrants, he committed acts of great injustice and inquisitorial violence, and the calamities of Poland may in part be considered as his work.

Count and Prince Zubof, the last official favourite of Catherine, was far from possessing the genius and ambition of Orloff and Potemkin, though at last were united probably in his person more power and credit than those celebrated favourites had ever enjoyed. Potemkin was indebted for his elevation almost solely to himself; Zubof owed his to the infirmities of Catherine. He increased in power, in riches, and in credit in proportion as the activity of Catherine diminished, her vigour abated, and her understanding declined. During the last years of her life, this young man found himself literally autocrat of all the Russias. He had the folly to wish, or to appear, to direct everything; but, having no knowledge of the routine of business, he was obliged to reply to those who asked him for instructions, "*Sdélaité kak pré-gédé*"—"Do as before." Nothing equalled his haughtiness but the servility of those who eagerly prostrated themselves before him; and it must be acknowledged that the meanness of the Russian courtiers has always surpassed the imprudence of the favourites of Catherine. All crouched at the feet of Zubof: he alone stood erect, and thought himself great. Every morning a numerous court besieged his doors and filled his ante-chambers. Veteran generals and grandees of the empire did not blush to caress the lowest of his valets.* Stretched in the most indecent undress on a sofa, his little finger in his nose, his eyes vacantly turned up to the ceiling, this young man, of a cold and self-flattering physiognomy, scarcely vouchsafed his attention to those who surrounded him. He amused himself with the tricks of his ape, leaping on the shoulders of his degraded courtiers, or conversed with his

* These valets have been frequently seen to beat back the officers and generals who crowded round the doors, and prevented them from being shut.

buffoons; while the veterans, under some of whom he had been a serjeant—the Dolgorukys, the Gallitzins, the Soltikofs, and all who were distinguished for their exploits or their crimes—standing around him, waited with profound silence till he condescended to turn his eyes towards them, that they might again prostrate themselves before him. The name of Catherine figured in his conversation; but he rarely deigned to pay the heir of the crown that exterior respect which the etiquette of the court required; and even Paul was forced to humble himself before a petty officer of the guards, who, but a short time before, had begged his pardon for having offended one of his dogs. To obtain money or favours for his dependants, the Grand-Duke Constantine paid him the most assiduous court. Meanwhile, none of the twelve favourites of Catherine appeared so poorly endowed in mind and person as Zubof. In his elevation he displayed no genius, no virtues, no passions, unless we account as such the vanity and avarice which distinguished him; accordingly, when his power expired his emptiness was apparent. The immense wealth of his family, and the vast estates extorted by his father from the landholders of his provinces, are the monuments which he left of his administration.* The death of the empress left him in a moment to the obscurity from which she had drawn him; as the ephemeron of a day, produced by the sun, flutters in his cheering beams, but cannot survive the passing breeze.

There were other personages on this disastrous occasion of a pale and woful aspect, but these were incapable of weeping. In them it was an air of guilt rather than of sadness, and their grief would bear no construction favourable to Catherine. We speak of those creatures of the favourite—those hypocritical ministers, those dastardly courtiers, that crowd of wretches of all ranks and conditions whose fortunes and hopes were derived from the easy disposition of Catherine and the abuses of her reign. In this desponding train must also be included those who had a share in the revolution of 1762: these men appeared to awake us from a long dream,

* Zubof's father was made a senator.

which had suspended reflection, to be delivered up to the influence of terror, and perhaps of remorse.

As to her physical organization, everyone knows that Catherine was handsome, and even at seventy years of age she retained some remains of beauty; but it may be said, perhaps, that her beauty was of that style whose charms cover some indefinable evil—a beauty which the condemned angels borrow when they are supposed to mingle with mortals. A painter, it is said, proposed to represent her as a mythological nymph, or deity, full of loveliness, presenting with her left hand palms and flowers, whilst with her right hand she concealed a dagger and the torch of the furies. That painter had a just conception of his model. Voltaire had named her the Semiramis of the North, and she appeared to have accepted that poetical compliment with pleasure. The title suited her in two ways, because the sovereign of Babylon had stained her hands in the blood of her husband, and usurped his power. It is thus that Voltaire himself represents the wife of Ninus, on the faith of ancient traditions, in his tragedy on that subject. We may, therefore, suppose that Voltaire concealed the most bitter satire under the mask of ingenious flattery. However, what a feeble compensation is this for all the falsehoods which he uttered in reference to Russia! “Whoever had seen her,” says Masson, “for the first time in her State apartments, would have found her not below the idea he had previously formed, and would have said, ‘This is indeed the Semiramis of the North!’ The maxim, *Præsentia minuit famam*, could no more be applied to her than to the great Frederick. I saw her once or twice a week for ten years, and every time with renewed admiration. My eagerness to examine her person caused me successively to neglect prostrating myself before her with the crowd; but the homage I paid by gazing at her was surely more flattering. She walked slowly and with short steps; her majestic forehead lofty and serene, her look tranquil, and frequently cast downwards. Her mode of saluting was by a slight inclination of the body, not without grace, but with a smile at command that came and vanished with the bow.

If upon the introduction of a stranger she presented her hand to him to kiss, she did it with great courtesy, and commonly addressed a few words to him on the subject of his journey and his visit; but then all the harmony of her countenance was instantly discomposed, and for a moment the great Catherine was forgotten in the sight of the old woman; as, on opening her mouth, it was apparent that she had lost her teeth, and her voice was broken and her articulation bad. The lower part of her face was rather rude and coarse; her grey eyes, though clear and penetrating, evinced something of hypocrisy, and a certain wrinkle at the base of the nose gave her somewhat of a sneering look.”*

The character of Catherine was firm, elevated, virile. She made herself respected and feared by a nation who detested her; but in private life, a mere woman, she exhibited inconceivable weakness. Her favourites, with whom she would never share the throne, whom she dismissed and disgraced at pleasure, exercised over her, in the intimacy of an illicit intercourse, a tyrannical, a humiliating empire. Orloff and Potemkin pushed that abuse even to the extreme point; in fact, the indomitable Catherine allowed herself to be *beaten* by her lovers, only opposing her tears to their ferocity! She was desirous of appearing to love literature and the arts, but it was without knowing their noble emotions—without feeling their charms. The only paintings which decorated her boudoir were two—one representing the burning of the Ottoman fleet in the bay of Tchesmé, and the other, the massacre of the Poles in the faubourg of Praga.

For herself and her court the reign of Catherine II. had been brilliant and happy, but the last years of it were particularly disastrous for the people and the empire. All the springs of Government were relaxed and impaired; every general, governor, and chief of department had become very despot. Rank, justice, impunity, were sold to the highest bidder. An oligarchy of about a score of men partitioned Russia, pillaged by themselves or others, the finances, and shared the spoils of the unfortunate. Their lives were so,

twelve favourites, making in the total a sum of 88,820,000 roubles. Of this enormous sum Masson remarks that, according to a pretty accurate list in his own possession, it is less by one-third than the actual amount which was publicly bestowed upon the favourites; and this again was exceeded in value by the gifts lavished on them in secret. All this profusion, and more besides, to an incalculable amount, was made at the cost of a state which was brought to the verge of bankruptcy. "If this woman lives to the natural period of human life," said Prince Scherbatof, "she will drag down Russia with her into the grave."

Russian literature and art owes nothing to Catherine, though she corresponded with Voltaire and D'Alembert, and invited Diderot to her court and pensioned him. She purchased, indeed, a few libraries and collections of pictures, pensioned a few flatterers, flattered a few celebrated men, who might be instrumental in spreading her fame, and readily sent a medal or snuffbox to a German writer who dedicated some hyperbolical work to her; but it was necessary to have come from some distance to please her, and to have acquired a great name to be entitled to her suffrage, and particularly to have obtained a recompense. Jealous of every kind of fame, and especially of that which Frederick the Great had obtained by his writings, she was desirous of becoming an author, that she might share in it. She accordingly wrote her celebrated "Instructions for a Code of Laws;" several moral tales and allegories for the education of her grandchildren; and a number of dramatic pieces and proverbs, which were acted and admired at the Hermitage. Of all her writings, her letters to Voltaire are certainly the best. They are even more interesting than those of the old philosophical and cynical courtier himself, who sold her watches and knitted stockings for her; and who repeats in his letters the same ideas and compliments in a hundred different forms, and excites her continually to drive the Turks out of Europe, instead of advising her to render her own subjects free and happy.

Catherine was neither fond of poetry nor music, and she often confessed it. She could not endure the noise of

the orchestra between the acts of a play, and she commonly silenced it. This defect of taste and feeling is astonishing in a woman who appeared in other respects so joyously constituted; yet may serve to explain how, with so extraordinary a capacity and genius, she could have become so obdurate and sanguinary. At her Tauric palace she constantly dined with the two pictures of the sacking of Otechakof and Ismail before her eyes; in which Cazanova had represented, with most hideous accuracy, the blood flowing in streams, the limbs torn from the bodies and still palpitating, the demoniac fury of the murderers, and the convulsive agonies of the murdered. It was upon these scenes of horror that her attention and imagination were fixed, while Gasperini and Mandini displayed their vocal powers, or Sarti conducted a concert in her presence.

With respect to the government of Catherine, it was as mild and moderate within the immediate circle of her influence, as it was arbitrary and terrible at a distance. Whoever, directly or indirectly, enjoyed the protection of the favourite, exercised, wherever he was situated, the most undisguised tyranny. He insulted his superiors, trampled on his inferiors, and violated justice, order, and the *ukases* with impunity.

It is to the policy first, and next to the weakness of Catherine, to which in part must be attributed the relaxed and disorganized state of her internal government: though the principal cause will be found in the depraved manners and character of the nation, and especially of her court. How was a woman to effect that which the active discipline of the cane and the sanguinary axe of Peter I. were inadequate to accomplish? Having usurped a throne, which she was desirous to retain, she was under the necessity of treating her accomplices with kindness. Being a foreigner in the empire over which she reigned, she strove to identify herself with the nation, by adopting and even flattering its tastes and its prejudices. It was solely by suffering her power to be abused, that she succeeded in preserving it. She had two passions which never left her but with the last breath—the

orgies and lupercalia she had formerly celebrated with the brothers Orlof. Plato Zubof was then the prime favourite; Valerian his brother, endowed with an athletic vigour, and Peter Soltikof, were associated with him in his happiness and his duty; and it was with these three young men that Catherine, the aged Catherine, passed her days, whilst her armies fought the Turks, butchered the Swedes, and devastated unfortunate Poland, whilst her people raised the screaming cries of misery and famine, and were morally devoured by tyrants and extortioners.

Before Catherine's death the monuments of her reign resembled already so many wrecks and dilapidations: codes, colonies, education, establishments, manufactories, edifices, hospitals, canals, towns, fortresses, everything had been begun, and nothing finished. As soon as a fresh project entered her head, all preceding ones gave place, and her thoughts were fixed on that alone, till a new idea arose to draw off her attention. She abandoned her code to drive the Turks out of Europe. After the glorious peace of Kainardji, she appeared for a while to attend to the interior administration of her affairs, but all was presently forgotten, that she might be the Queen of Taurica. Her next project was the re-establishment of the throne of Constantine: to which succeeded that of humbling and punishing the King of Sweden. Afterwards the invasion of Poland became her ruling passion; and so imperiously did this fascinate her, that a second Pugatchef might have arrived at the gates of St. Petersburg without inducing her to relinquish her hold. She died, again meditating the destruction of Sweden, the ruin of Prussia, and mortified at the success of French republicanism.

And what a contrast, what a lesson, does the death of the three greatest personages in Russia offer! Orloff, who reigned twelve years by the side of Catherine, died in a state of deplorable insanity. Potemkin—the powerful, magnificent Potemkin—the founder of so many palaces and cities, the conqueror of a kingdom, expired by the wayside; and Catherine herself fell down senseless on the floor of her cabinet, and died soon after with a lamentable shriek. That

shriek was the voice that proclaimed Paul Emperor of all the Russias!—whose throne his mother had usurped for five-and-thirty years.

The genius of Catherine required a nation so new and malleable as that of Russia, and of which she might say, as the statuary in La Fontaine says of his block of marble: “Shall I make of it a god, or a table?” Of the Russian she could not make a god, but she might have made him a man; her greatest crime is the not having consulted her glory in doing this.

It has often been remarked that the Empress Catherine II. always distinguished very accurately between her feminine and her imperial honour. It might be so; but nevertheless Russia by submitting to the reign of Catherine and her twelve favourites, proved itself the most debased of modern nations.

THE END.